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# TRUST FOR TRUST.

BY A. J. BARROWCLIFFE,

AUTHOR OF "AMBERHILL."

"For every inch of woman in the world,
Ay, every dram of woman's flesh, is false,
If she be."—*Winter's Tale.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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# TRUST FOR TRUST.

## CHAPTER I.

### HILL AND VALLEY.

A good many years ago a girl, standing in one of the valleys of North Wales, was calling to a flock of sheep on the mountain. She called loudly and often. The sound was echoed, and the air rang with it. It was a high, wild, prolonged, and jubilant note, repeated at short intervals with considerable vigor. At a little distance it seemed to issue from the rocks, and to be the effect of their unseen vibration. It filled the valley with an invisible life, warm and musical; and when it ceased, the ear waited for its return as for a

natural feature in the scenery. The valley lay among high mountains. It was nearly oval in shape, and perfectly flat; a level floor of grass, extending some distance lengthwise, but scarcely two hundred yards across, walled in by the surrounding heights, whose bases sprang abruptly out of it. The mountains on the northern side were not precipitous, but rose in a succession of green mounds and slopes, like the swelling pastures that have given the Alps their name; but on the south, the rocky wall, though green and sloping also to a considerable height, was far steeper everywhere, and ended above in crags and precipices, whose rough gray masses, broken by dark fissures, worn by torrents or shivered into ruin by frost and storm, hung grim and gaunt over the beauty they had guarded and fertilized through their own ages of desolation.

At both ends of the valley, the mountains approached each other. Westward, they descended on an irregular plain, to which a tolerably wide opening gave easy access, while eastward, the rocky heights grew continually higher, the valley ending there in a steep and dreadful pass several

miles in length, but for the most part, only broad enough for the passage of a mountain torrent, and for a path, little better than a sheep track, by its side. The torrent, foaming down over blocks of stone that would have choked up any lowland river, became in the level valley a broad stream, somewhat rapid, but never noisy, flowing between green banks, over gray and yellow pebbles, black weeds and starry moss. The pasturage on either bank was divided into small meadows by loose stone fences, low earthen mounds, or scrubby hedges. In the midst there was a small scattered village; that is to say, there was a very low and towerless stone church, with perhaps thirty cottages, dotted about without the least suggestion of a street, or any regard to anything but the convenience of those who built them. They were all of stone, roughly whitewashed, with slated roofs continued almost to the ground behind, so as to cover their little out-houses. Most of them had small gardens, with a few gooseberry bushes, and there was a sprinkling of trees; birch, ash, and elm; of no great size, among them. A tolerable road passed

up the valley, at the foot of the northern range of mountains; most of the cottages were near it; and the fields on that side of the stream had gates that opened into it, but it was continued only a little way beyond the village, and dwindled into a narrow track before it reached the pass.

The girl was standing in one of the meadows on the other side of the stream, with her back to the water and her face raised towards the steep slopes of the southern range. She had been calling for perhaps half an hour, changing her position from time to time, and by degrees throwing back her head more and more, that her voice might strike the mountain higher up after each interval. Her purpose was not to draw the sheep into the valley, but to drive them from it. It was spring; the snow had melted, the streams were full. The lower pastures with their boggy soil had become too damp for the mountain flocks, who nevertheless came down to them, and had to be scared away to the drier neighbourhood of the crags. Unpractised eyes would at first see nothing on the mountain slope, except the green of its herbage, the gray colour

of its rocks, the bright lines and patches where moisture trickled over them, and the brown furrows that were occasional watercourses when the snow melted suddenly, and after violent storms. But the girl herself saw the flock creeping slowly upwards, nibbling from side to side, pursued by two shepherd dogs, who, having worked hard all the morning, appeared to have grown tired and sluggish, and to be only kept from lying down comfortably behind the tails of their charges by the repeated ringing of her voice about their ears.

She was rather tall, and could not be called slender. She was dressed in the short peasant's dress of the country. Her face was very sweet to look at, though with a mouth perhaps too large, with eyes too small, and a forehead too prominent above for the rigid letter of beauty. But the face passed like light even through the sunbeams. Its complexion was neither white nor red, but like one of these seen through an atmosphere of the other. The hair was sunny brown; the eyes were happy: the lips pouted prettily when they were not smiling, and curved

into archer lines when they were. It was an honest face; one to be loved and trusted; one likely enough to win its way, withal; and to have it, being won.

She had been watched for some little time by five individuals.

At the door of the cottage nearest to the field she was in, a man and a woman, past middle age, stood together, looking at her. They were both smiling; the man, sadly; the woman, proudly. Sometimes they spoke to one another, though only a few words.

In the road, with his head resting on his arms, and his arms on the gate opening into the little meadow, a young man, about five-and-twenty, stood, sulky and silent, with a dog at his side. He had the dress of a working man. His round hat was pulled over his eyes; perhaps to shade them from the cheerful sunshine. What could be seen of his face was dark and dogged: heavy brows; firm lips; cheeks square and pale. He was directly behind the girl; the field and the stream between them; and he also seemed watching her.

On the bank of the stream, lower down, stood

another young man, of the same age or thereabouts. He wore a handsome blue coat with brass buttons, white breeches, top boots, a gentleman's hat and cravat, and a watch with a gold seal.

He was tall; well made; florid and handsome; with blue eyes and brown hair. He also had been looking at the girl as he approached the stream, but at this moment his eyes were on the water, as if he thought of stepping into it, but had not yet made up his mind.

The last of the five lookers-on sat at a greater distance than the rest, on a craggy knoll on the other side of the road. She was nearly hidden by the projecting rocks, and sat unobserved. She might have been almost a girl, but the beauty of her face, which might even be called splendid, was so marred and wasted by passion, sorrow, or time, that it seemed impossible to guess her age. She wore a hood instead of a bonnet, was dressed in black, and had wrapped herself in a shawl when she sat down.

The young gentleman who had been looking into the water, seemed to think it must be deeper

than his boots, and being conscious that whatever he might gain in credit he must lose in appearance, by splashing through, he turned back rather impatiently to some rough stepping-stones lower down, and reached the other side without either having displayed his courage or spoilt his clothes. He walked quickly towards the girl, who continued her calling and was unconscious that he was coming. He stopped close behind her, paused a moment till the clear ringing note had ceased, and then spoke, smiling gallantly.

She turned round, blushing. Her hand went involuntarily to her hair, which was disordered. It was not a coarse hand, as might have been expected, but small and rather fair. He spoke again, raising his hat, and listened in a respectful attitude while she answered him. She looked towards the cottage; took two or three steps along the bank of the stream; stopped again as her companion followed, and listened in her turn. He took her by the hand, and they walked together slowly across the fields, passing at length out of sight behind a little rocky mound by the

river. As they did so, the two old people spoke again to one another, and the wife re-entered the cottage: the young man leaning on the gate kicked his dog, and turned towards the village: and the woman among the rocks walked away in the direction of the pass.

The two who had disappeared behind the hillock were soon seen again on the other side. The girl's hand was still held by her companion, and there was a bracelet on the wrist. He looked in high spirits and talked gaily to her. She seemed to make no answer. The warm tint upon her face was warmer: her head was bent forward; her eyes looked only at the ground; her lips were just parted, trembling a little. They approached the stepping-stones. He handed her over them: her arm shook, and she seemed to need the unaccustomed help. They went together up to the cottage door where the old man was still standing. The young gentleman addressed him immediately in a spirited manner, and with a respectful bow. He replied in a few words; speaking to the girl herself. She raised her head, stepped quickly forward, and opened

her arms. The old man clasped her in his own. In a second or two he made her turn towards her companion. She kept hold of her father's hand, but she laid her head on her lover's shoulder.

So that was settled.

## CHAPTER II.

### ABOVE THE HILLS.

The old man's name was John Griffiths. He was born in the valley, but he had not lived there all his days. As soon as he could walk he followed his father's sheep into lonely places, and loved nothing better in his boyhood than to spend a day or a night upon the mountains, watching the flocks, tending the new born lambs, finding out the greenest pastures and the clearest streams, and learning in an unlettered way the beauty and tenderness of nature. He did not see anything terrible in the crags or the roaring torrents: they turned their kind faces towards him, and showed him only their beneficence. He grew up delicate, but active; with a stainless character and a modest intelligence. His mother was an Englishwoman. At eighteen an English farmer hired him and took him away.

He soon pined after his mountains, and would have returned to them, but a new affection coming into his heart became gradually the stronger. His master's niece lived at the farm and was kind to him. She was a fine country girl, well-bred, and in his eyes a lady. Her comparative elegance and refinement were a halo of light to him. He saw round her a vision of fairy-land. She seemed far off at first, and he revered her as one in another world, but as the years passed they appeared to bring her nearer. Her kindness became more timid; she even blushed sometimes when he spoke to her; and when a lawyer's son came wooing her he was sent disconsolate away. However, if John Griffiths began to believe he loved her, he was far too poor to think of marrying her, so he sighed and lived on in the bright presence, very happy in his quiet way, always delicate in health, and thinking more and more of the life to come.

His thoughts often took the form of verses. He became the village poet. His compositions were chiefly hymns. They were often sung at the rustic church when a sermon was to be

preached for some special occasion. One of them began as follows — the verse illustrating the general leaning of his simple mind : —

> " Come, my friend, and go with me
> To yon place called Calvary ;
> Where my dear Redeemer died,
> Where my Lord was crucified."

In his way, too, he became a great astronomer —not in the technical sense, to be sure ; but the stars were his familiar friends and he loved them individually. His favourite constellations were the Corona Borealis, which he took to be the pattern of the crowns of Heaven; and the Pleiades, because he thought they were twinkling eyes from which God was wiping away the tears. He had a special fondness, too, for the second bright star in the tail of the Great Bear, with its small companion. It looked at him, he said, like a ewe sheep with her little one. When he had been ten years in the same place, the farmer's niece being still unmarried, a legacy was left him, amounting to fifty pounds a year. He received the news in silence, but he looked up tearfully to the sky, and then went on with his

work. That night and the two following, he spent among the fields with the sheep, the bats, and the great firmament over all: he told his happiness to his favourite stars, and his gratitude to the Lord who made them, and an hour before daybreak he went to his bed for a short, dreamy slumber. On the fourth day he offered himself and all he had to his master's niece, and she became his Mary.

After his marriage he went back to his native valley took one of its small farms and sheep-walks, and became a principal inhabitant in the village. He had one child only. She bore her mother's name and was her father's darling. Mrs. Griffiths, from her own acquirements, was able to give her daughter something of an English education; her husband had gathered many stores of genuine knowledge, and their means raising them above the necessity of much hard labour, Mary grew up a different being to the other maidens of the valley. She knew two languages to begin with; an uncommon thing in those days among those mountains; and though proficiency in Welsh is not a fashionable accom-

plishment, her knowledge of English gave her an immense advantage. She was now in her seventeenth year; she could read, write, and sum; had never seen a piano, but could sing her country's songs and her father's hymns. Her clear round voice was famous in the valley; and when the sheep had to be scared it was generally Mary's task to do it. The dogs knew her well, and would work for her longer than for their master; and the sound of her calling would ring up the mountain sides where most other voices became inaudible. She led no idle life; she washed and scrubbed, made hay and milked, cut wood and carried water when required; but the Griffiths were well enough off to keep a strapping lass for most of the dirty work, and the weather-beaten father, proud of his child's fair skin and pretty fingers, was better pleased to see her at her needle or with a book in her hands, or to have her with him on the mountains, listening to his simple thoughts or telling him her own.

Mrs. Griffiths had become a stout, comely person, much shrewder and more worldly than her husband; very fond of him, and very praise-

worthy in all her deeds. One object of her life was the quiet assertion of her own good-breeding; another was the reproduction of it in her daughter's manners. She succeeded well in both: for as to the first, there was no one else in the valley who could hold a candle to her; and as to the second, Mary had her father's natural refinement, and, being a woman, any grace or propriety once suggested to her was taken instinctively and became a part of her nature.

Among other things, boys flourished in the valley, as usual. According to custom they developed also into youths, and finally into lovers. Six of them scratched their heads in Mary's presence in the course of a year, and desired to keep company with her. They got gentle but summary answers. Their mothers gossipped together on the heinous character of pride; and the other girls of the village wished to know what there was in Mary Griffiths. She was looked upon as sour grapes for half a year, and then a seventh arm was raised to pluck her. Mr. Owen Williams, aged four and twenty, born at Milford Haven, endowed with a knowledge of English, a

clever head and a most resolute will, a petty overlooker in the neighbouring slate quarries, and, moreover, the son of a tradesman who might leave him five hundred pounds when he died, took courage one January morning and told Mary he wished to marry her. When she told him she was much obliged to him, but she couldn't think of it, he grew dark and stern, spoke harshly and fiercely, and left her at last quite frightened by the assurance that he had made up his mind to have her, and have her he would. Now Mary, in spite of her gentleness, had on some occasions as strong a will of her own as may become a woman, and had he waited till her momentary fright was over, she would have told him plainly that if he indeed would have her it must be in another world, for she would rather die ten times than marry him in this. Though he did not hear this, however, he understood perfectly well that his rejection was point blank and definite, and he lapsed into a sullen state of daily reflection as to the means whereby she might be won. My story begins in the spring that followed this January of rejection, and Mr. Owen Williams was the gentleman who

felt it necessary to kick his dog when he saw Mr. Anthony Forrest, the successful lover, go with Mary across the field.

Mr. Forrest's present visit to the mountain village was by no means his first. He went there two years before on a fishing excursion; in ill health, irritable and unhappy. He was accommodated with lodgings in John Griffiths' cottage, and he went home to England in the course of two or three weeks, pretty well, and quite cheerful. The next year he came again; first in the spring, and then in the autumn. He always found it convenient to lodge at the shepherd's cottage, and to be on good terms with the shepherd's daughter, and on the last occasion, her parents began to look grave, and to express to one another their doubts as to his intentions. When he had gone, Mrs. Griffiths took an opportunity of speaking to Mary on the subject, and the girl blushed a little, but said with her pouting lips—that it was all nonsense. What was Mr. Forrest to her? She never expected to see him again. A very pretty little lie, but Mary thought it must be true, or she would

not have said it. Happily for her peace, and for human honor, and for sweet Nature's heart-strings, Mr. Forrest's purposes were straightforward and unexceptionable, at least as soon as he knew them himself. When the snow melted he returned; and after another week at their cottage, he was in love with Mary, and acknowledged it to himself. A second visit within a month made him resolve to marry her. He came a third time, after a shorter interval; arrived in the evening, entertained the farmer and his wife till midnight with the interest of his conversation and the flow of his spirits; saw Mary's pretty confusion when he spoke to her; her blushes when she bade him good-night, and her timid glance behind her at the foot of the stairs; went radiant to bed, and in the morning, when Mary was in the fields, explained his wishes to her parents. He made a frank exposition of his means, which were splendid enough in their eyes; told them candidly that he was twenty-five years old, and a partner in his father's bank; assured them that though his parents knew nothing of his attachment, he would answer for,

and presently obtain their approval of it, and in regard to their daughter's tender age, he remarked that his own mother was married on her seventeenth birthday, had had several children, and still remained a handsome woman. Against such fair proposals, made by one whose honorable character they already knew, no objection could be raised. He went at once from them, across the stepping-stones, and came back with Mary.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE ABYSS.

To Mary's simple vision the engagement between herself and Anthony seemed a matter whose interest extended no further than the village where she lived, and the home to which she might be taken. She knew nothing of life's complicated machinery, and never dreamt that the little wheel of fortune, turning now so pleasantly before her eyes, was one only of a long series, was itself moved forward by the backward motion of another, and in its turn was setting other cogs agoing, with what possible result only the Maker of the machine could say beforehand.

A storm had broken on the south coast of England about a fortnight before the day of Anthony's proposal, and a fisherman's boat went down in the wild surf within half a mile of

the shore. It was a rising tide, and the wind blew from the sea, and in a short time one of the drowned men was thrown upon the beach opposite a grand hotel. A wife was standing by the surf when the boat went down; but when the dead body floated to her feet, a widow took it in her arms. There was a crowd round her; it closed, increased, grew quiet; moved again, opened; and the corpse was carried by three rough sailors, tenderly along the grand parade, for this was a fashionable watering-place. The widow followed close. None could see her face, for it was covered, but her grief was seen; and the windows of the grand parade were filled with spectators till the sad sea tragedy passed out of sight.

One of those spectators was in the best drawing-room of the great hotel. It was a crimson room, with heavy crimson curtains and a crimson carpet; long mirrors on the walls, and a chandelier of glass over the table. On the table were two decanters, some wine glasses, unused, and a tumbler which had been used and was half empty. Between the table and

the fire, in a heavy easy-chair covered with crimson and gold damask, sat a short, thin man, with a red forehead and unquiet eyes. He was little more than thirty years old; but the thin lips and selfish chin, the sunken cheeks and irritable nose; the weak hair, already turning gray, and the smile, half cunning and half weariness, into which the unhealthy features were habitually drawn, showed that a lifetime of dissipation had been pressed into those thirty years. He had a sporting newspaper in his hand, was drinking wine at intervals out of the tumbler, and biting between the draughts the ends of his cadaverous and tremulous fingers.

At one of the windows his wife stood looking out upon the sea. She was tall and very handsome, but her beauty was in the wildest ruins. It was not dissipation, but passion that had wasted it; nor was the ruin after all a grand one, for her face expressed strong feeling but little intellect, and was altogether that of a woman who, having rushed into a foolish error, has aggravated the evil of its consequences by a foolish rage, rather than of one whose bloom has perished in

the struggle with inevitable sorrow. She was ten years younger even than her husband: her hair was black, and worn in long curls over her shoulders; a fierce, bright colour was on her cheeks, and her forehead, pure white, but neither broad nor high, was crowned by an impatient wrinkle. She had stood for half an hour without stirring, leaning against the crimson curtains, with her hands joined together on her black velvet dress, moving the rings, one by one, slowly up and down her fingers, without looking at them. She had been watching the tragedy on the shore; had seen the dead fisherman thrown at his widow's feet; had observed the signs of momentary hope, and of the grief that followed; and had unconsciously been arraigning Providence, not in pity but in selfishness. Her thoughts took no definite form in her own mind, but if they had done so it would have been pretty nearly as follows: "That woman loved her husband, and she has lost him. I detest mine, and he is safe in his chair. She has children, no doubt, who will grow up orphans and be very poor. I have no children; and if I

had, the sooner their father died the better for them. She must be half ruined by this loss; her husband was her chief estate; she can have nothing left but the pitiful rent-roll of her woman's labour. It will cost her a month's earnings to bury him, and she will measure out the crape by inches because of her children's bread. I should be a richer widow than I am a wife; there might be plumes enough, and crape enough, and a marble monument over the family grave. I should give new caps to all the widows in the parish instead of wearing one myself, and the money spent upon the funeral would make the undertaker a happy man. If somebody must be drowned, why should it have been this poor fisherman? Suppose my husband had been in the boat; he might have been. He went out fishing yesterday, when the sea was quiet, and had very nearly gone again this morning before it began to blow. I believe he would have gone if I had opposed it. What possessed me that I was so good-natured? He never deserves to have his schemes approved; and I ought to know by this time that when I agree to anything he

is sure to change his plan. He talked about it at breakfast; said the doctor recommended fishing, and it did him good. I wanted to get rid of him, and he knows that, I am sure. How stupid to let him see it! The boats were lying ready, and this was one of them. He actually went half down the beach before he turned back. If I had only beckoned to him when he turned, he would have gone on board, I know; but he saw me looking vexed and so, of course, he came back again. Cannot we have it over again, that I may beckon to him? He has been drinking all day, and a pretty night we shall have; and the fisherman will be lying dead, and his wife a free woman again."

"Kitty," said the gentleman in the easy chair, after a long draught from the tumbler, "you may pack up your traps, for I shan't stay here another day. I 'm as strong as a horse, and I 'll go down to Cambridge to-morrow, and ride the mare's tail off, by jingo."

"Do as you please. I don't believe there has ever been anything the matter with you, or ever will be."

"Don't you though, by Jove! I should like to change nerves with you, Mrs. Fraser. I should like to lend you the back of my head, Mrs. Fraser."

"Very well: be as ill as you can—the worse the better."

"Oh, that's it, is it? Don't be in a hurry, Kitty. It's not a killing complaint. I shall live till you're old and ugly, anyhow. There never was a Fraser that didn't bury his own wife. My father lived seven years dead drunk, and died on the wrong side of seventy, and he never would have died at all if the doctor, God bless him, hadn't stopped his grog."

"Mr. Fraser, you grow more disgusting every day. I shall not stay with you; I shall leave you to imitate your father."

"Go and do it, Kitty; but, by Jove, you shall live on five shillings a week, or you shall live with me. You're a fine girl still, when you're quiet, or I wouldn't have anything to say to you."

"I shall petition for a separation, sir, and a suitable allowance."

"Go and do it, then. I tell you, there are

girls I like every bit as well as yourself, and a wife 's rather in the way sometimes."

"Mr. Fraser! Do you think I shall submit to hear such language? If you cannot be decent, I shall ring the bell, and have witnesses to prove what you are saying."

He had stretched himself out in his chair, and was chuckling inwardly. He made no immediate reply; and his wife, turning her back upon him, stood shaking with rage and indignation by the crimson curtain. The room was hot and close, for its windows had been padded to keep out the storm; a large fire was burning, and a heavy atmosphere in a crimson room neither inspires nor mollifies. She felt herself helpless against him. She had married him under circumstances which put her entirely in his power; there was no considerable insult among those available for domestic purposes which she had not received already from her husband, but when she hastily resented them with threats, like those she had just made use of, it was only to feel directly afterwards, how vain her fury was, and how impossible it was for her to do anything

but clench her teeth, as she did now, and let her breast heave, as it was heaving, under the black velvet bodice and the ringlets round it. When he spoke again, which was after a pause of two or three minutes, she did not turn to him or notice the change in his voice.

"Mrs. Fraser, get me the brandy."

"Get it yourself."

"Mrs. Fraser, I say; get me the brandy—I'm ill."

"You are drunk, sir."

"Am I, though? By Jove! I wish I was. Oh, Lord!"

He got up staggering, and tried to reach the sideboard, but fell giddily upon a sofa on the way. His wife, turning her head to look at him, saw that his face was drawn up, and very pale, and that he was gasping for breath. It was sudden illness, perhaps sudden death; but the first effect upon her being that of terror, she rang violently for help, and carried the brandy bottle to him with all the speed imaginable. It revived him a little, but he could hardly speak intelligibly, and then only of pain.

His wife gave the necessary orders; he was put to bed, and the doctor came. While the medical examination was being made, Mrs. Fraser left the bedroom, re-entered the parlour, sat down upon the sofa, and waited the result.

The first fright was over; she had begun to be conscious that a sudden change in her whole destiny might be close at hand; that the fixed, inevitable future, as it seemed an hour before, might be nothing but a phantom terror, not unreal only, but impossible; that the storm of that tempestuous day might not have been only on the sea, nor the fisherman the only victim; that another boat, on other waters, might be foundering in another gale, and the life sucked down with it, her husband's. The doctor entered with his verdict before even these thoughts had had time to overcome the instinctive dread of death, and she shivered when he came with a grave countenance into the room. He told her shortly that the ailments for which her husband had come to the sea-side had been to a great extent removed, but that his persistent life of debauchery had developed a hidden and inward malady

whose manifestation had been sudden, and would be fatal. Six months perhaps he might survive; longer than that was out of the question. He would rally from that day's attack, but only to have it renewed from time to time, till he died in the final spasm.

Mrs. Fraser sat up all night in her husband's room; a woman's natural pity, a certain sense of awe, and a strangely new feeling with regard to him, more like gratitude for something he had promised to do than anything else, led her to this vigil, and made her nurse him patiently through the first painful hours. The task, however, became more difficult as he revived: and when it was decided that he should be taken home to his mansion in the north of England, Mrs. Fraser managed to get a temporary respite from his violence, as well as a foretaste of her coming freedom, by going herself some days before him on pretence of necessary preparations.

She left him at daybreak, for the journey was long, chuckling over his last insult. He had been desiring her to carry a message to one of his mistresses, and she stepped into her carriage with

a disposition to drive at once to the ends of the earth and be rid of him for ever. Rapid motion and the moving landscape, the quiet of grazing cattle, flowery meadows, and unruffled pools; the cheerful blossoming of orchards, and nature's general content on a sunny spring morning, are influences not easily resisted by one who rides alone, and in an hour or two Mrs. Fraser's thoughts had turned to more agreeable objects than the recollection of the parting scene. She began to feel the liberty that was approaching; to fancy the interval past, the funeral over, and herself travelling in her own carriage by her own road, without a husband at either end. He was so entirely lost; so worthless, shameless, and bad, that a much better woman might have felt almost as Mrs. Fraser felt with the prospect of his speedy death before her. As to the unspeakable relief of losing him, there could be no doubt about it. His presence in any household was a nuisance inconceivable, and could never be otherwise. But Mrs. Fraser had not learnt the custody of the thoughts before her marriage, and had had no particular inducement to do so after

it: and, as she rode along, her visions did not rest in the simple realization of relief from her present burden. In the background of her memory there was an earlier life, with better hopes and promises. It seemed a paradise of happiness, seen across the intervening gulf. Once it was despised and thrown away. Now, the whole thirst and question of her soul seemed to be—if only it might come back again. Why should it not come back again? She had only been two years married; and the gate by which she had entered her early garden of delight was still open, as far as she knew. To know more certainly was the next irresistible desire. She was changing horses at a town where the North road divided into two branches, and she said to her footman through the window.

"Take the route through PORCHESTER."

At the first mention of that thriving and well-known midland town, the cautious reader may as well arm himself at once against the confusing influence of a corrupt orthography. An old castle in the south, built by Gurguntus, son of Beline, in the year 375 B.C.—or, if not so, then otherwise—

still looks over the guarded waters of Portsmouth harbor and gives its name to a petty village, which, from being the Portus Magnus and the Caer Peris of other tongues, has become the PORTCHESTER of our own. Now modern spelling, by dropping the all-important fourth letter in this name, hath done much to confound this miserable Hampshire suburb with the grand old historic Borough of our story. The spelling, however, as everybody knows, is incorrect; the object at once obvious and detestable: the fame of the true and only PORCHESTER needs but to be hinted at to remove all risk of mixing up its affairs with those of a dilapidated fortress, a shabby street, and a parish unable even to boast the existence of anything like a creditable mystery in regard to the origin of its name.

"Take the route through PORCHESTER," said Mrs. Fraser. It was not much to say: but, on the whole, it made a considerable difference.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE CAP OF LIBERTY.

Late in the day Mrs. Fraser's chariot crossed the bridge, mounted the steep ascent, turned the dangerous corner of the High Street, rattled across the market-place, and stopped at the chief hotel in the old borough town of Porchester. Mrs. Fraser had never been there before, and the town was picturesque enough to interest a stranger; but it was with even more than a stranger's interest that she looked for the first view of its tall chimneys and examined, as she drove on, the high brick houses, the narrow streets, and the people who passed along them. She had especially noticed a massive ruin on the outskirts of the town, almost overhanging the river which ran below; and before the carriage stopped she had observed that in the market-

place, opposite to the hotel, there was a brick house with the word "Bank," in large raised letters on its front, and the name of "Forrest and Son" on a wire-blind in one of the lower windows.

Mrs. Fraser engaged a front room for the night; and having ordered dinner, she wrote a short message on paper, which she sent her own footman to deliver. It was addressed to a Mr. Fowkes, the landlord of a little inn with a curious sign just outside the town. Mr. Fowkes had been butler to Mrs. Fraser's father, who lived in Sussex. He left his place on the occasion of his marriage and settled soon afterwards at Porchester; but being somewhat disappointed in his business expectations, and finding that the office of his cash-box was likely to become a sinecure, he had solicited and received assistance from his former master against one or two remorseless quarter-days. This happened during Mrs. Fraser's maidenhood. She had become familiar with Mr. Fowkes' address and the general aspect of his circumstances, and on the present occasion she congratulated herself on having such an instru-

ment at hand in Porchester. The only question was whether the quarter-days or Mr. Fowkes had got the mastery in the meantime, for during the two years of her married life she had heard nothing about him. Waiting for her servant's return from the search after him, she sat at the hotel window, looking across the market-place with its stalls and booths, its country carts and country faces, and the large word "Bank" on the opposite side. It was a very different scene from that before the window where she sat when the fisherman was drowned, and Mrs. Fraser's feelings had changed also to a very considerable extent. No sea was here with its wild tumult of unrest, no shore of fragments, no horizon of cold gray, hanging between wind and water. The people below her were neither sickly invalids nor sauntering idlers; the hotel was not half so grand, but was ten times more cheerful.

There were white curtains to the windows; they were white, notwithstanding the opposition of the factory chimneys. The walls and furniture had a predominant shade of light green; there

was an easy chair between the table and the fire, but nobody sat in it; and when the door opened, a waiting maid with cherry red lips and ribbons came in to lay the cloth. The place seemed either to create or to correspond with a cheerful humor in Mrs. Fraser's mind. The desperate desire for liberty had given place to a feeling of its enjoyment; and if her eyes still flashed and her pulse beat impatiently it was with the excitement of hope instead of anger.

"This is market-day, I suppose," she said to the waitress.

"Yes, ma'am."

"Does it make you very busy?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"And the bankers too, I should think?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Is that the only bank in the town?"

"I don't know, ma'am; I 'll ask the master."

"Don't trouble yourself. Have you lived here long?"

"Only three months, ma'am."

"Do you know who lives at the bank?"

"Old Mr. Forrest, ma'am."

"Is there a young Mr. Forrest?"

"Yes, ma'am; there's a young gentleman, but he's not often at home. I've heard he goes courting somewhere."

Mrs. Forrest turned quickly to the window. It was past sunset, but the large gilt letters of the word "Bank" still looked bright in the twilight.

"The young gentleman is not married, then?"

"Not that I have heard of, ma'am."

Mrs. Fraser did not follow up her inquiries any further; she sat watching the fading lustre of the large gilt letters till her dinner was ready, and then she ate her meal heartily, and in silence; when the cloth was cleared away, and the candles lighted, her servant returned from his errand. He had been successful in his search after Mr. Fowkes, had brought that gentleman with him, and was immediately desired to leave him with his mistress.

Mr. Fowkes entered the room composedly. He was a tall stout Englishman, with a large face, round, red, and grave. Something negligent about his handkerchief, and something ragged about the edges of his linen, suggested various

doubts regarding his married bliss, and his lips joined themselves together like those of a man who has tasted other ingredients of life besides its honey. But he was rather a fine fellow, of the heavy kind; a man who would look twice before he leaped, and perhaps see very little for all his looking, but who could leap decidedly when he was determined. Mrs. Fraser's message had been only that a lady wished to see him; and when the door was closed upon them, Mr. Fowkes stood looking at her with a puzzled air, half wonder and half recognition. She sat in the easy chair between the table and the fire; very handsome, for her face was flushed with interest and impatience, and an uneasy look of trouble in her eyes only made them brighter.

"You forget me, Richard."

"Well, Miss Catherine, I should say it was you."

"I was Miss Catherine when you left us, Richard. I am altered a good deal since then."

Mr. Fowkes was looking at her jewelled fingers, for they sparkled in the candlelight. There

were brilliant stones on every finger of her left hand, except one, and that had only the wedding ring. She wore no guard to it; it was not a thing to guard; but the symbol of her wife's estate was the more conspicuous in consequence.

"I should say you was married, ma'am."

"I am married. You have gone through the same ceremony, Richard."

Mr. Fowkes cleared his throat, and admitted the circumstance.

"Being married, Richard, I have a right to take an interest in those who are not."

"In those who are not," repeated Mr. Fowkes, and he sighed.

"Of course you hear all the gossip of the town, and know all the principal people by this time. You have been here two or three years."

"Three years next quarter, ma'am; and I should say I do."

"I want to learn, Richard, privately, whether young Mr. Forrest, the banker's son, is likely to follow our example." She could not prevent herself, it seemed, from speaking in a hesitating

voice; and, as if the fact annoyed her, she added, with a defiant look at Mr. Fowkes, "I know the gentleman by sight, and have a particular reason for my inquiries. You are aware, perhaps, that I have seen him at my father's."

"Never heard of it," said Mr. Fowkes. "He never come there in my day."

Mrs. Fraser seemed to hear this with satisfaction.

"It was after your time, Richard," she said; "and I have not seen him myself for two years. Tell me what you know about him."

"Well, Miss Catherine, he 's the right sort of man to get married. He 'll keep his missis in her place, or the house won't hold him. He 'll be a born tyrant one of these days. It 's a pity but Mrs. Fowkes had had him."

"Is anyone likely to have him? I heard just now that he was paying his addresses somewhere."

"There's been a talk about it," Mr. Fowkes replied, "and I should say it 's likely. He goes down to Wales, and they say he 's after a girl there; but who it is nobody knows: what I hear 's

what the servants say. The old gentleman knows nothing about it, nor the missis either. He 's not been so well, you see, and they think it 's his health he goes for."

"When did he go last? Is he at home now?"

"Can't exactly say. Haven't seen him this week."

"Is there any way in which you could inquire without speaking of me?"

"Well, I could step over to the back door, and get it out of the housemaid."

"Pray do, Richard, as soon as possible; it shall be worth your while. You know I never gave you trouble for nothing."

Mr. Fowkes smiled at the comfortable hint, and went on his errand without more ado. As soon as he was gone Mrs. Fraser threw herself on the sofa, covered her forehead with her hand and began to cry.

"To be too late at last! I might as well have been born a slave, for liberty is useless. I might as well have had no will of my own, for it only cheats me. I never have a hope that is not frustrated; a pleasure that is not embittered; a

scheme that does not turn out a failure. I might as well drown myself at once."

She did her best to do it with her tears, but the storm having subsided her feelings took a different turn.

"I cannot make things worse. No: nothing can be worse, whatever I do. Then let me fix my mind on it, and resolve to have it so, and see what cannot be done by a desperate woman. I will! If I fail again, it's only what I'm used to. If not ——"

She had no time to draw the other side of the picture, for Mr. Fowkes re-entered the room. His inquiries at the back door of the Bank had been secret and successful. Mr. Anthony Forrest had left for Wales by coach that afternoon, and Mr. Fowkes had even got the name of the village he was going to. The coach would take him as far as Chester. He had a horse at Chester, which would carry him the remainder of the way. Mrs. Fraser listened, and inquired whether there was any other coach to Chester. There was the mail that night in about an hour. Mrs. Fraser sat still for about

two minutes, and then informed Mr. Fowkes that she should go to Chester by the mail; that she desired what had past between them to be kept secret for ever, and that she begged his acceptance of a bank note for ten pounds. Mr. Fowkes departed; his impression of Mrs. Fraser's behaviour was, that it was queer; but the queerest thing of all being the existence of a ten pound note in his pocket, without any immediate claim upon its appropriation, he allowed his mind to rest on this singular phenomenon, and to draw two inferences:—The first was that Mrs. Fraser was a lady: the second, that a lady might do as she pleased.

Mrs. Fraser rang the bell for her servant; desired him to take the carriage on to his master's seat next day; and informed him that, having business in Chester, she should proceed there herself that night, and should reach her home in a day or two; soon enough at all events to make preparations for her husband's return. In another hour the mail coach rolled over the still busy market-place, and Mrs. Fraser took her place inside.

## CHAPTER V.

### IN THE PASS.

The mail reached Chester at breakfast time, and stopped at one of the hotels, almost under the wall of the ancient city. Mrs. Fraser had slept and dreamed; her dreams were of bygone days and childhood, and she woke in a sweeter mood, turning rapidly to bitterness however, as the wheels upon the stones recalled her memory and dispelled her visions. She eat some breakfast, inquired where the day coach from Porchester stopped, found it was at another inn in a different street, and went out for the purpose of shopping. Her purchases were a large dark shawl and a hood. She put them on at the shop where she bought them; examined herself in a looking glass, and, finding herself sufficiently disguised, took the way towards the second inn.

The way was down one of those singular "Rows" for which Chester is famous: a half open gallery, the whole length of the street, raised a few feet above the pavement, with the shop windows and doors opening out of it, the overhanging upper floors for its roof, and stalls with intervals between on the street side. Mrs. Fraser's purpose was to follow Anthony to the Welsh village, and see with her own eyes what he was doing there, after first ascertaining whether he had already gone; and she was hastening down the row for this purpose, when she met the young banker himself, face to face, at the door of a jeweller's shop. He had been looking in at the window, and had turned suddenly as she came up to him. He turned again almost at the same moment to enter the shop, and did not recognise her. Mrs. Fraser stopped, hesitating, and with a cry of surprise scarcely stifled. The unexpected meeting seemed to have taken away her breath. She caught hold of one of the wooden supports on the street side of the row, and stood watching him, as, well dressed and with a whip in his hand, he walked up to the counter. The shopman

brought out various trinkets, most of which Anthony pushed away in a very summary manner. A box of rings seemed to please him better. Mrs. Fraser looked eagerly, and saw that they were not wedding rings. He tried some of them on his little finger, but there appeared to be some doubt as to the size he wanted, and they also were put aside. Finally, he chose a bracelet. Mrs. Frazer saw him pay several pounds for it, and leave the shop with his purchase in the left-hand pocket of his waistcoat. She let him pass her a few steps, and then followed him. He went at once to his inn. His horse was waiting for him at the door. She saw him mount into the saddle, shake the reins, and gallop off on the Welsh road.

"This is courtship without doubt," thought Mrs. Fraser, under her close-drawn hood. "But," and there seemed to be some strange satisfaction in this idea, "he has not been buying a wedding ring." She hastened back to the hotel, ordered a carriage and post horses, and was soon following on Anthony's heels. It did not suit her purposes of observation to enter the mountain

village with the noise and splendor of carriage wheels and a postilion, and she stopped therefore at the nearest posting inn, several miles from the valley where John Griffiths fed his sheep. The road was longer than she had expected. She had supposed that Anthony would have to bait his horse by the way, and that she should overtake him, but he went by bridle-paths across the country, and she saw no more of him. It was dark when her carriage stopped. She must wait till morning.

Very early in the morning she left the post inn alone and on foot; a two hours' walk brought her to the village, and there before the stable door of a little public house, Anthony's horse was being curried. Mrs. Fraser had no difficulty in learning all that was to be known from the stable-boy. The gentleman had been there several times. He arrived yesterday afternoon. He slept at John Griffiths'. He was not up yet; at least, he had not come out of the house. He was going away that same afternoon, and his road would lie up the pass. John Griffiths had a daughter. She was out already, scaring

the sheep. She was a good girl, only very proud.

Mrs. Fraser got some breakfast at the public-house, and learned a few more details concerning Mary's parentage and character. Her father's cottage and the field where she herself was calling to the sheep were pointed out, and Mrs. Fraser, having arranged her plan, walked on through the village. As she passed the farmer's cottage she saw Anthony sitting alone at table, through the low lattice window. A clever woman bent on interrupting his intercourse with Mary, whatever its nature might be, would not have let slip this opportunity of speaking to him while Mary was away. But Mrs. Fraser, though daring, was not clever. She felt as if some solitary place was necessary for their interview; she had settled in her own mind how it might be managed; and leaving him to finish his breakfast undisturbed, she walked on through the village. It was easy to identify Mary as she stood calling beyond the brook where we first found her. Mrs. Fraser looked at her across the field with a mixture of contempt and anger in her countenance, and choos-

ing a spot from which she could see at once both the cottage and the girl, she sat down to observe what followed; what she saw has been already told.

Anthony Forrest left the village the same evening, an hour before sunset. He went on horseback, and took the narrow road leading through the pass, which was the nearest way by many miles. The evening was very fine. He rode in high spirits, congratulating himself. There was the stream he had crossed—a river of paradise it seemed; there, the field where he found her; the mountain shadows fell across it now, but somehow it looked brighter than the illuminated pastures on the opposite hills. He made his horse walk slowly past the sacred hillock; then stopped, looked back, smiled contentedly, and trotted briskly on. At the entrance of the pass, a great shoulder of the mountain came abruptly down on one side, making the road bend round it; as he passed the rock and the wild defile opened before him, Owen Williams stepped into the road and held up his hands.

"Stop!" he said, in a surly voice. Anthony did so.

"What do you want, Williams? What are you doing here?"

He knew him by sight, but had not often spoken to him. Williams stood in the road, looking more than usually morose. He pulled up his coat sleeves, and said, "Get off your horse: I'll fight you."

Anthony was disposed to be amused. "I've no time for that, my man. We're all friends to-day. Good night."

But Williams laid his hand on the bridle and repeated, "I'll fight you. Get off your horse. You're not going to get Mary Griffiths so cheap as that, I tell you."

"This is nonsense, fellow," said Anthony, getting anoyed.—"Speak respectfully of Miss Griffiths, and let go my bridle, if you please."

"I'll not let it go; I'll fight you. Come down, I say."

Anthony struck his spurs in, and turning his horse's head sharply, disengaged him and rode by. Williams turned almost black with passion, but controlling his voice and raising it to its loudest pitch, he cried after the incensed horseman, "Ride

away, there; ride away! Mary Griffiths is a harlot. There! take that with you."

Anthony immediately stopped, and rode back to him in a violent passion. "Rascal!" he exclaimed, raising his whip, "do you know what you are saying?"

"I say," returned the other, doggedly; "I say Mary Griffiths is as much mine as yours, or anybody's. Ride away."

Anthony got down from his horse, threw away the bridle, seized the Welshman by the collar, and with the strength of violent indignation in his arm, succeeded in giving him such a terrible horsewhipping that he was glad to throw himself on the ground and roll down the bank of the torrent. A large boulder stopped him; and Anthony, thinking he had had enough, regained his horse, and rode once more up the pass.

It was near sunset. He had lost time, and was anxious to reach the high-road before night set in; but the steep, rugged, and narrow track between the rocks and the watercourse made anything like haste impossible.

The shadows fell darkly over him. The

desolate precipices frowned over the torrent, and its roar grew wilder as all other sounds ceased in the increasing loneliness. The red sun glared fiercely on the highest crags in front. They returned the glare, flushed and angry. The angry flush faded. The gloom deepened. The crags still grew higher and closer. Sparks of fire began to be visible as the horse's feet struck the hard rock under them.

Anthony Forrest rode on with anything but a tranquil mind. The shameful word was in his ears; and though he felt no more doubt of Mary's purity than he did of her accuser's baseness, it enraged him to have heard her name coupled with a disgraceful one, and to be obliged against his will to remember both of them together. To leave her in the same village with Owen Williams was wormwood to him also. He resolved to ride back and warn her against him, but changed his mind, recollecting that she knew Owen's character, and that to delay his own return home was to lengthen the time she must still pass in the same village. But he smiled no longer; his blood was hot, and his brain uneasy. He urged his horse im-

patiently along the difficult and now terrific way, and when near the top of the pass he was obliged again to come to a standstill, he drew the reins in with an angry jerk and a strong desire to swear.

The obstacle now before him was a woman in black, with a hood and a shawl on. She stood in the middle of the track; and at this point it had become so narrow, and passed along the edge of a bank so steep and stony, that not even a Welsh pony could safely venture forward while there was anything in the way.

"My good woman" said Anthony, in an irritable voice, "I must trouble you to step aside. There's not room for both of us, and I have no time to lose."

The woman stood still however. "And if I do not?" she said.

"There will be no alternative for me but to back out of this infernal pass and ride ten miles further round."

"Suppose you ride over me, Anthony. It might be kind."

She put back her hood; black locks fell out of it. There was no longer light enough to see the

details of her face, but Anthony raised his hands in astonishment.

"Good heavens! Catherine Fraser! what brought you here? What are you doing? Where is your husband?"

"My husband! ask the devil. He is about his business. Let me ask questions, too. I have come here for no other purpose. I have waited for you in this lonely and fearful place that we might talk alone."

"Whatever you have to say, Mrs. Fraser, must be said quickly. I have neither time nor patience to-night."

"It shall be said at once, Anthony. You have left a girl behind you in the valley. What are you doing with her?"

"I left my betrothed wife there," he answered, and the words seemed to be spoken bitterly. "If you know her, Catherine, leave her alone; that is my best advice to you."

Mrs. Fraser touched the bridle of his horse and came a step nearer to him. She seemed to have something on her lips which it was difficult to say, and though the shadow from the precipices made

everything indistinct, she began to draw her hood over her face again.

"Anthony, the past sometimes comes back to us. Sometimes our miseries are only night-mares; we can wake from them, and be as if we had never dreamed."

"I admit the fact," he answered, impatiently, "but I am unconscious of the application."

"Be patient. There are things a woman finds it hard to say, and you are angry, and will understand nothing but plain language."

"The plainer the better, Mrs. Fraser. We are not quite the proper parties for mysterious confidences. You are a married woman, and I am a gentleman."

"Yes," she answered, "I am a married woman; but marriage is not always from everlasting to everlasting. A wedding ring is a strong chain, but not so strong that death will not break it, Anthony."

"If you think of suicide, Mrs. Fraser, the place is certainly convenient, but I warn you that the act is wicked, and I see no reason why you should make me participate in your crime."

It was too dark to see the expression of her face, but she came still nearer to him.

"If I thought of suicide there would be little to wonder at. Marriage is a bed of flowers, Anthony; even I have found it so. But when they are monkshood and henbane, nightshade and upas, hemlock and almond, would you have me lie for ever on such poison weeds?"

"Catherine, you have made your own fate and must take the consequences. If you are mad, there is no help for you. If not, the life of a penitent is better than the death of a coward."

"I am not mad; I have never been a coward. If I speak of death, it is not my own. A chain may break at either end, Anthony, but the liberty is the same. Leave that girl in the valley: let her marry her equal."

"I am much obliged to you for your advice, Mrs Fraser. Perhaps you will tell me why on earth I should follow it?"

She answered almost in a whisper; her hand trembled on the rein, and she drew the hood still further over her face. "Because,"— she said,— "because my husband is dying."

Anthony backed his horse suddenly. "Never speak to me again!" he cried.

She stepped on to a ledge of rock, leaving the narrow path clear for him, and motioned him forward. He shook the bridle, but checked his horse again immediately.

"Mrs. Fraser, you are a woman and there is no human habitation within some miles. I must see you safe out of this gorge."

She stood still, saying nothing.

"Choose your own way," Anthony continued. "I shall follow you, and protect you."

"I have dared marriage," she answered, huskily, "and this interview—I can dare solitude now. Go!"

"Not till you lead the way."

"Then I shall remain here."

"Obstinate as ever!" cried Anthony, angrily. "It is a disgrace to me to leave you here; and you are resolved to humiliate me."

"You have set me the example. I have spoken, and you have answered. We have heard each other, and understood each other. Go—you, at least, are no protector of mine."

"True, Mrs. Fraser; and as there is no other character in which I can attend upon you, it is, I suppose, my duty to sacrifice my inclination. If any harm befals you to-night I shall resent it as a personal injury, but it is, I perceive, impossible to do more."

He rode on. While the sound of the hoofs was heard, Mrs. Fraser remained immoveable. Then she stepped down on to the path, threw back her hood in the starlight, and drew her hands slowly over her face and hair.

"Is their power ended?" she said. "Was it the darkness, or the change?"

## CHAPTER VI.

### MRS. FRASER'S VISIT.

When the crags were dark; the torrent, a buried monster, roaring and gurgling; the distant lights in cottage windows on the mountain sides like fires burning deep in subterranean passages; when the green slopes had become black precipitous masses, and the valley, a deep abyss in which nothing stirred, John Griffiths sat by a bright fire in his chimney corner, smoking his evening pipe, and talking over the day's events with his wife and Mary.

Mary had been giving various signs of a disturbed intellect; had presented her father with the snuffers instead of his tobacco-box; had been upstairs for her mother's knitting, and returned with her beaver hat and shawl; and had finally covered herself with confusion by putting the por-

ridge pot on the fire and stirring it for five minutes before she ascertained that it was empty. Blushing and laughing at her last mistake, she took the pot hastily from the bars and set it down on the deal table, where, being nearly red hot, it immediately raised a circle of pungent smoke, which made Mrs. Griffiths start in her chair and drop her spectacles.

"Why, fie, now, Mary!" she exclaimed, "what sort of wife will you make, I wonder, if your head's turned with the thought of it?"

Poor Mary, quite confounded now, and almost ready to cry, took the saucepan from the smoking table, picked up her mother's spectacles, and then stood still with a bewildered air, as if afraid of trusting herself to attempt anything further.

"Bless the girl," said her father, smoking his pipe, and smiling at her with his brown, thin face, "she's leaving her mark with us, any how. We'll call that round there, Mary's wedding ring. It's a black one, and a deal too thick on this side, but never mind that; weddings must all end in funerals, and its seldom both sides of the

match wear out together. Don't be afraid, my lass. I sheared off a sheep's tail, poor thing, the day I asked your mother."

"John," said Mrs. Griffiths, "it's not well to talk of funerals by candle-light; and Mary had need to mind her manners better. She's too shy by half. She blushes up like poppies if one says a word, and it's a mark of ill-breeding."

"Nay, wife, she's young and tender; I wouldn't have thee ill-mannered, Mary; and the mother knows best about that, but I think thou'lt learn pretty soon what's wanted for a lady. As to funerals, why, they'll come; be sure, they'll come. The Lord won't take us to Heaven without them; and when they do come, mayhap they'll find us readier than we think. Don't think you're going to live for ever, Mary, when you're a lady, and don't let your husband think so. I've seen gentlefolks live as if their coffins were'nt surely growing, and heard them talk as if the Lord hadn't marked the flax for their winding sheets."

"John, I never heard such talk. Coffins and winding-sheets! you 'll frighten the girl."

But Mary had crept behind her father's chair,

and was leaning over it, looking into the fire, gravely, but not as if she were afraid.

"I'll not scare her, mother. She's going from us; it's almost like giving her to the Lord; she'll see us now and again; but it's as good as another country she's going to. The world's very good, as the Lord said; but there's a better, and I'd have thee mind it, Mary, and see it, like as if it was very near."

There came a sharp knock at the outer door of the cottage.

"Jenny," said Mrs. Griffiths, "see who 's there."

"Yis, missus," said Jenny, the working lass, appearing from a little back room. The cottage had a deep stone porch, fitted with slate shelves, where washing-tubs were kept, and there was an inner door, dividing it from the sitting-room, besides the outer one. A woman's voice was heard presently in the porch.

"Do you speak English here?"

"Yis, indeed, ma'am."

"Then let me come in."

Mrs. Fraser entered the parlor. She stopped, and looked round at the homely group.

"Will you give me a lodging to-night? I can pay for it."

"No, ma'am," said Mrs. Griffiths, rather proudly, "you can't pay for it here, but you can have it if you like to take it."

"I will take it then. Have you anything to eat? I am hungry."

She took off her hood and bonnet, and sat down.

"There 'll be porridge ready just now. Don't stir the empty pot again, Mary; or perhaps you could eat some bread and butter?"

"I could eat anything; will you give me some water first?"

She looked hot and tired. John Griffiths, after getting up and giving her welcome, sat down again to his pipe. His wife and daughter hastened the preparation of supper, Mary in the meantime looking shyly, now and then, at the stranger, whose appearance attracted and half alarmed her.

"You 've travelled a good way?" said Mrs. Griffiths, looking at the stranger's feet.

"Yes."

"You don't belong to this country?"

"No."

"Are you going further?"

"I am going to Chester."

"Why that's a hundred miles."

"Not quite."

"You 'll wish it was nearer before you get there."

"When I get there, I shall wish it was at the bottom of the sea."

"I dare say: you'll be knocked up altogether."

"No, I shall not walk much further. I am not poor. I can ride when I please."

"Why do you walk at all then?"

"It suits my purpose."

"Why, you must have a queer purpose to be walking alone at this time of night. It 's too dark to see."

"I see many things in darkness—night would not hide them if it were blacker than ravens' wings."

She seemed to be forgetting herself, and lapsing into abstraction. Mrs. Griffiths surveyed her as if she only half liked her visitor. Mary, who in her frequent glances at her had always found the strange woman's eyes fixed on her own face,

or seeking it, looked round again, and saw her now gazing at the wall.

"The Lord made the Night," said John Griffiths, taking his pipe from his lips, and smiling peacefully. "You're right, ma'am; there's many things it's like sunshine to: I've seen many a bad face I couldn't find it in my heart to call God's creature by daylight; but when the dark came, it was just the shape the Lord made Adam, with all the sin blotted out. I'd soonest meet my enemy by night, if mayhap I was angered against him and wanted to forgive him."

"John, you're a queer one," said his wife. "Come to supper, man."

The stranger ate eagerly. Her face, in its exhaustion, appeared so haggard and despairing as to lose almost its own terrible beauty; but after swallowing the porridge, and drinking a deep draught of butter-milk, she leaned back in her chair, and a change came over her. She hastily pushed back her hair, cast her eyes upon the ground with a spasmodic frown on every feature, raised them the next instant with a smooth brow and smiling lips, and fixed them upon Mary.

"I have been dismal," she said, "but I was tired: your porridge has revived me. You will be a rare farmer's wife some day; you make it so well."

Mary blushed, and looked at her mother. Her mother coughed, raised her head a little, and went on with her knitting. John Griffiths, who had not yet finished his supper, put his spoon down, and said, with one of his quiet smiles—

"She's been a good daughter; and, the Lord bless her, she'll be a good wife to him that gets her, be he a farmer or a duke."

Mrs. Fraser looked disturbed.

"Have you lived here all your life?" she asked, hastily, looking at Mary.

"Yes, I was born here."

"And have brothers and sisters?"

"Not one."

"And have you been to school?"

"Only to my mother."

"The mother," said John, interposing, "is mayhap the best scholar in these parts, and she's taught Mary all she knows, and somehow a deal more; and the girl 's learnt what 's written

outside in the fields, and up there in the skies, and how the grass is fresh because it 's growing, and the sun's bright because he 's shining; and what a thing it is to smutch the snow, or leave a young lamb in the storm."

"That must be education enough for a village life," said Mrs. Fraser; "what a pity it goes for so little in a town!"

"Some towns may be mighty particular," Mrs. Griffiths answered, drily, "but I 've seen many a lady could neither read nor write like Mary."

"Oh, very likely: reading and writing may be half dispensed with. What society requires is a knowledge of the world's ways, and thoughts, and fashions: what to do, and how to do it; what to say, and how to say it. You do all things as you please here: you should be thankful for your liberty. In a higher rank, if they are not done by rule, and if the rule is not a habit, you are miserable, for you are vulgar."

"I think, ma'am, I 'll trouble you not to say any more about it," said Mrs. Griffiths, looking with severe dignity over her spectacles. "Our

Mary's fit for any of your towns, and you're making her shake as if she wasn't. Put the work down, and get to bed, my girl, before the needle's through your hand."

"Nay, let her hear it, mother," said John Griffiths, "the lady's partly got the right of it, but not altogether. It's likely enough they'll laugh at thee, Mary, for thy country ways; but if they laugh, thou'st hurt nobody, and the ways will mend. We must all have something to bear, or the Lord won't know us for His servants. You see, ma'am, the girl's going from us, and she's going to be a lady; she's timid, but it's best to know what's coming, and there's no harm done."

"Oh, I beg her pardon," said Mrs. Fraser, who had been watching the effect of her own words in Mary's troubled face and unsteady fingers. "She is not, then, to be a farmer's wife? Marriage, to be sure, seems best between equals; but as to being laughed at, if her husband bears it as well as herself ——"

"Let's have no more talking," said Mrs. Griffiths. "Go you all to bed. It's your own fault, John: you've been croaking all the evening

about things best left alone. Bring us another candle, Jenny, and get undressed."

The stranger rose, went up to Mary, and took her by the hand, smiling.

"Will you sleep with me? I am nervous at night and have bad dreams if I am alone."

Mary said she should be very glad to do so. Her mother looked doubtfully at her and her intended bed-fellow; but muttering to herself, "Well, she can't harm her," she left them to do as they pleased.

Mary led Mrs. Fraser to her own little chamber. It was a whitewashed room, with a dormer window; a white blind of coarse muslin, worked with a pattern of daisies and little lambs, was drawn across the lattice panes, and in the window there was a small looking-glass and two or three early rose-buds in a china mug, with "Mary" in gilt letters on its side. The bed, without posts or hangings, but as white as snow, was in a corner opposite the window. A chair stood by the pillow against the wall, and a little table in front of the chair, with several books upon it. A low chest of drawers served also

as a washstand, but they were of polished mahogany, and Mary took more pride in them than in anything else about her room. They were her father's present, in a year of unusual plenty, when the flocks multiplied exceedingly, and the corn in the valley ripened before September. On the slate mantel-piece was one china ornament—a figure of the Good Shepherd; and beside it lay a gold and jewelled bracelet, on a little nest of white wool, spread carefully underneath. The floor was partly covered by two strips of carpet, in the form of a cross—one from the door to the fireplace, the other from the window to the bed side; and on the walls were hung in frames two of Mary's samplers; not for vanity, but because the words she had worked there were verses from her father's hymns.

Mrs. Fraser sat down on the bed when the door was shut, surveyed the room, recognised the bracelet, and again fixed her eyes on Mary, watching her closely while she took off her short peasant dress, and the loosened hair, falling from her pretty hands, shone like burnished gold in the candlelight.

For the success of her own purposes Mrs. Fraser's visit had been anything but satisfactory. She saw that neither Mary nor her parents belonged to the common order of villagers. She fancied Mary's beauty must be something irresistible if set off by fashionable dress and seen in drawing-rooms, and she knew enough of Anthony's temper to doubt the power of any common obstacles to defeat his intentions. Thinking of him, however, and her own resolve growing deeper as she thought, another feature in his character rose into prominence and seemed to promise help. His wife must own him as her master; he would expect obedience, and demand unlimited confidence. Mystery would excite his jealousy: concealment, his anger. A secret between him and Mary would be the surest worm in the bud, provided Mary were the possessor of it. Could she make it so? At any rate she would try.

"I see how it is," she said, undoing her black hair, which was as long as Mary's; "that bracelet tells the story. Some rich lover has been here, and has won you, Mary. Keep him faithful if you can."

Mary turned, with a long lock in her hand, surprised, and half indignant.

"He is faithful," she said. "I need not keep him so."

"Ah, you are simple, Mary; you know nothing of what wives may have to bear. How old are you?"

"I am not seventeen, but you do not know him."

"Look at me, Mary; come close: I am only four years older than yourself. Do you think four years will change you so?"

Mary's bashfulness had prevented her from examining her guest's appearance very critically before. She saw now that her color was hectic, her eyes were sunken, and her whole appearance was that of a much older woman.

"What has done it?" she asked, compassionately.

"Love has done it; marriage has done it; passion and misery have done it. You sleep here alone in your white chamber, while other women are breaking their hearts under their marriage curtains. Can you guess why I am walking alone in this gipsy fashion through this wild country? It is to get a few days' respite from my husband's

company; to feel what life would be if he were dead, or I had never known him."

"You have made an unhappy marriage," said Mary, rather paler than before: "you must be very miserable."

"Unhappy!" Mrs. Fraser rose, walked up to Mary, and put her hand on her shoulder. "Do you pity me?"

"Indeed I do."

Mrs. Fraser bent her head over the girl's hand, and kissed it. On the whole, it was a piece of deliberate acting; but the feelings she wished to assume corresponded so nearly with her natural ones that the keenest eye would not have seen her hidden insincerity. Mary's eyes were, for detective purposes, disabled on the spot. She saw nothing but an unhappy sister, thanking her for her sympathy.

"I am so seldom pitied," Mrs. Fraser said. "People blame me rather. But they never knew all my story. I cannot make confidants of men, and my own sex cannot keep a secret. If I could tell the whole, it would be easier to bear."

Mary's pity was not lessened by this statement, and her curiosity was much increased. "You may tell me," she said, "without being afraid. I can keep a secret."

"Can you?"

Mrs. Fraser drew the hair from Mary's forehead, and looked at her in apparent admiration, though with a cruel triumph also in her eye.

"I am sure you can keep your word, Mary, and if you promise, you shall hear my history.

"I promise; I will never tell."

"Sit down on the bed then, by my side. Let me put my arm round your waist, for henceforward there is a bond between us till we die."

They sat down together.

"I was born," said Mrs. Fraser, "in a country mansion in Sussex, and I lived there nearly twenty years. My father was, and still is, a county magistrate, of no large fortune, but of an old and respected family. I was one of several daughters: we were said to be handsome, and of course we had many lovers. One of those who fixed their fancy upon me was a gentleman ten years older than myself: a man of prodigious

wealth, but so questionable in his character that my parents forbad me to encourage him. He could make himself agreeable, however, and knew how to hide his vices; and he so displayed the power of wealth before my eyes that I began to long for its possession, and for some time I showed him sufficient favor to keep him dangling at my sleeve. He was in earnest in his suit—he really wished to have me, and was ready to settle half his wealth on me, as the price of my hand; but his love was the most selfish of all his passions, which is saying a great deal. I pleased his eye; indeed, I more than pleased—I fascinated it; and he was ready to buy me on my own terms. While I still hesitated, there came another lover. He was nearer my own age. He was handsome, noble, honorable; his wealth was not dazzling, but it was sufficient. He admired me, and made me see it; I liked him at our first meeting. In a week I loved him, in a month I almost worshipped him. He asked me to be his wife; we were engaged, with the approbation of my parents, and to my own intoxicating bliss. My love had burnt rapidly, but

it was because my whole nature was on fire. He was made to win me; he won me. The flame will last while I have a heart for it to feed upon; and longer, if anything survives the grave. We quarrelled, nevertheless. I was headstrong, overwhelmed with happiness, riotous with power. He was born to be a master, and he could not be otherwise. We quarrelled, therefore; sometimes about trifles, sometimes on graver matters. I tried my power, and found that I could conquer even him; that in the last extremity, he yielded to my caprices rather than break with me. We had had more of this than usual, and one day we sat together in an arbor in my father's grounds. I and my sisters were in the habit of amusing ourselves by addressing ridiculous letters to one another, tying them with love-knots, and putting them under trees, on garden seats, or wherever they were likely to be met with. One of these, intended for me, had been put that day among the leaves of the arbor, where it was known that I and my lover often met. I did not see it in the leaves, but a gust of wind brought it down, and blew it to my feet. It was as if some one had

thrown it there that moment, and as I picked it up I saw my companion change color and frown. I moved a little way from him, read my letter, and put it in my bosom. He asked me to show it, and I refused; he commanded, and I laughed at him. We were both in our haughtiest humors; I tried to conquer him as usual, and this time I failed. His anger became fearful. He left me at last, with the threat that if I did not obey him when we met again, our engagement should be broken. I was perfectly mad. To be threatened where I had always ruled; to obey perforce, and at dictation! He should have turned to see my face as he went away; but he did not turn, and my former lover was in the garden. He had come in a fit of despair, to try his fortune with my next sister, who was a good deal like me. He passed the arbor where I sat alone in my madness. I called him in. The next night we were married at Gretna-green.

I woke in a double sense the morning afterwards: I woke from frenzy, as well as sleep; but my feelings need not be described. The bare

fact was, that I had given myself over as a slave to one of the vilest of human beings. My husband's vices were unspeakable. He pursued them in the most shameless way before my eyes. He was cunning too, and saw at once all the advantage I had given him. When I asked him for a settlement, he laughed at me. While I was my own mistress I might have had what I pleased as purchase-money, but the purchase had been made already, and on far easier terms. All I could obtain from him was the bequest of a large legacy, indeed a fortune, in his will; and this, being revocable at any moment, was the security for my submission to his pleasure. I had no refuge, and no friend. My family, disgusted and disgraced by my conduct, cast me off. My parents even refused to see me. I lived in this way two years, and you can no more imagine here what my life has been than you can see in your mountain brooks the horrors of the ocean. You may see its traces in my face, in my ruined beauty; in the white hairs that you may find already among these black ones; but these

are footprints only; you know nothing of the Thing that made them.

A short time ago my husband was seized in his chair with a sudden illness. He did not die then; he is not dead now; but the attack was mortal, and before the leaves fall, he will be rotting in his grave. Does it shock you that I can speak so about his dying? The true wonder is that I can talk of it without a burst of joy. When I knew the attack was fatal, I felt as a woman may feel with a tiger's paw upon her, when she sees a gun fired at his head. What else could I feel? It was the only blessing I had tasted since my wedding-day. I seemed to live again, and I resolved to do so, for with relief from misery comes the thirst for happiness, and a great hope rose on me at the same time. My love for my real lover had neither slept nor faded. I never saw him, and knew nothing of him except that he was still unmarried; that was enough for me to know while my own bondage had no visible end; but when the chain was breaking, how could I rest without other knowledge? I

went in search of him, and found him; he had engaged himself to another woman that very day."

Mrs. Fraser paused, and hid her face in her hands. Her own feelings were so much excited by her story, that she half forgot her purpose in telling it to Mary.

"You know now the fulness of my misery," she continued; "you may understand why I wander about the earth. I am like a ship-wrecked woman who has watched a sail of deliverance approaching, and has seen it dashed to atoms on the rock where she herself is lost."

Mary had listened with a bewildering feeling of astonishment to her companion's history. It dealt with passions and frames of mind till then unknown to her, and she felt uncertain whether to be touched or horrified. She made some incoherent remarks of a compassionate kind, and asked Mrs. Fraser whether she had not better try to sleep.

"I shall sleep better," she replied, "now I

have told you; you are the first woman who has heard my story from my own lips, and you shall be the last. Keep your promise to me: I rely upon it."

There was a worse meaning in the words than Mary dreamed of. She did not hesitate to repeat the promise; indeed, a tale like this seemed only fitted to be buried. "Tell me your name," she said, innocently; but Mrs. Fraser shook her head, and answered that it was needless to burden her with so wretched a one. They lay down side by side, with a strange bond of knowledge and as strange a bar of ignorance between them: both lay long awake, and both were thinking of Anthony. But Mary, when the candle was put out, had gone quietly to the mantel-piece, and clasped the jewelled bracelet, which she had laid aside during the day, on her round warm arm in the darkness. She fell asleep with her other hand upon it, stroking it tenderly, while Mrs. Fraser's fevered and impatient fingers were chafing against her wedding ring.

Mrs. Fraser left the village early next morning,

regained her carriage, and returned as rapidly as she could. She had accomplished one thing. She had put a secret into Mary's bosom, and she felt pretty sure that Mary's promise would be kept. It was a secret that might be turned to many uses; and, not to lose time about it, she stopped at Chester to write an anonymous letter to Anthony in a feigned hand. The plan, like most of Mrs. Fraser's, was rather clumsy, but it had its consequences.

From Chester she went as quickly as possible to her husband's mansion in the north. Two letters were waiting for her there; one was from Mr. Fraser, announcing the fact that he felt somewhat better, that he had changed his mind, and that he was going on the Continent, whither he desired her to follow at her leisure; the other, from her confidential maid, who was with him, advised her to follow if possible on the wings of the wind: because Mr. Fraser's worst associates were with him, his will had been sent for, and there seemed reason to fear that he might alter it in her absence in a way she had little

reason to desire. Seized with a sudden dread of poverty, and feeling that not a moment was to be lost, Mrs. Fraser hurried back to the carriage she had just alighted from, and drove furiously southward.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

"Well, sir, and who gave you leave to make a fool of yourself?" said Mr. Forrest the elder, banker and magistrate in the borough of Porchester, sitting after breakfast with his boots off, and his legs, covered with white ribbed stockings, crossed over the fender. He wore white breeches, a blue coat like his son's, and was a fine, jolly-looking old gentleman, with a large head of curling white hair. His cheeks were marked by deep but not painful lines, and came down in ample folds below his chin. He had a large Roman nose, a forehead of sound British sense, high shoulders and stout limbs. On the other side of the fire sat his wedded wife, who had loved, honoured, and obeyed him, or, having done the first and second, had vicariously placed them in

the room of the third also, during a period of thirty years. She was still young; at least she was of that persuasion, and her faith was great. No one but her husband had ever seen so much as a gray hair among her ringlets; and he, on making the discovery, had been rebuked for his curiosity. She was a tall, handsome lady, with regular features and of great reputation. She had reared several children, with becoming pride in her success, and a strong assurance that they owed their existence and growing up in a very small degree to the laws of nature, and principally to the plan on which she had fed, washed, clothed, and otherwise nourished them. Her satisfaction, indeed, was not without a tinge of melancholy, for neither her daughters nor the wives of her sons could ever be brought to put an adequate value on her experience and her advice; not that they agreed in their own plans, but they all disagreed with hers; and she was compelled to see her grandchildren hurried on by their misguided mothers to a destruction which she deemed inevitable.

Her hope, however, still rested on her son Anthony. He was not the youngest child, but he had always been his mother's boy, and was now the only one at home. His married life, she felt assured, would be less disastrous than that of his brothers and sisters. He, at least, would certainly listen to the opinions of his mother, and, his temper being a decided one, would insist on the adoption of common sense as the basis of his domestic management.

He was standing now between his parents, leaning his back against the breakfast table. He looked animated, and his color was greater then than usual, for he had just related his love affair, and put them in possession of his intentions. Mrs. Forrest had listened with feelings not far removed from satisfaction. She was not proud by nature, and could even look wooden shoes in the face without shuddering. Her other children had all married into good families, and what was the result? Their offspring from the moment of their birth, and indeed before it, were managed in a manner thoroughly false and ridiculous. She

rather liked the idea of a peasant girl for a daughter-in-law. Being, of course, ignorant of everything, she might be teachable; as one under infinite obligations, she might behave with humility. In the present state of her family Mrs. Forrest felt that her special endowments were lying on the shelf. She was made to bring up children. Nature would have acted judiciously in providing her with them more continuously; but in default of anything better, a young daughter-in-law from a Welsh cottage would give her powers some exercise. In addition to these thoughts, which may not appear to have been altogether unselfish, I must add that her affection for her son was boundless, and that in fact she had never been known to oppose him in anything when once he had set his heart on it.

Her husband, however, did not see matters under exactly the same light. He was good-natured and very fond of his son, but he was a man of the world, and, as a magistrate, was accustomed to look at more sides than one.

"Who gave you leave, sir, to make a fool of

yourself?" he repeated, as Anthony only bit his lip at the first question, without making any reply.

"You must see, sir," he now answered, "that I cannot admit your premises. I am no fool in this matter. I look upon it as the wisest act of my existence."

"Which may be saying very little for its wisdom, sir. Let us talk like men of business. In the first place this girl is poor."

"Your liberality in making me a partner has raised me above that consideration."

"She is plebeian."

"I thoroughly understand politeness, and shall instruct her."

"She knows nothing; can't read or write perhaps; never heard of geography, and would take the globes to be apple dumplings. Is that it, sir?"

"On the contrary," Anthony said, "although her knowledge is of course limited, she is not in that respect much behind many of our neighbours and acquaintances. On that point also I am well qualified to be her director."

"You have a good opinion of yourself, young

gentleman. The girl is too young to be married."

"My mother, sir, was married at seventeen, and is the boast of Porchester."

The old man shrugged his shoulders, and looked facetiously at his wife.

"He has me there, Nelly. You mean to say this girl pleases you, Master Anthony?"

"Her education excepted, she is everything I could desire."

"And you think she'll make a good wife?"

"I know she will."

"Then I recommend you to write her a letter of condolence, inclose a check for five pounds, and tell her your father is inexorable—inexorable," he repeated, pushing his lips out solemnly, and putting his hands in his pockets.

Anthony's color rose still higher; a spirit of proud impatience flashed in his eyes.

"You astonish me, sir; am I a boy, to be dictated to? Do I deserve no confidence—no respect? Can you possibly believe my choice in such a matter to be guided by anything

but the soundest judgment — the most mature deliberation? I am twenty-five years old; I am neither a fool nor a madman; my passions are at all times entirely under my own control—if they were not, I should despise myself; and yet when I tell you my decision—when I, who am chiefly interested—I who alone have any real means of judging accurately—I, who never yet formed an opinion which I was not able to justify —when, I say, I have satisfied myself and made my determination, you coolly tell me that you are inexorable. It is preposterous, father. It is not to be endured."

Mr. Forrest listened without moving a muscle; at the end he whistled.

Mrs. Forrest, who had been looking uneasily from the son to the father and back again, now put in a word:

"I am sure, Anthony, you misunderstand your father. He appreciates your character, I am certain, and will do whatever is needful for your happiness. You must have patience, my dear son. I have no doubt myself that you are right,

but elderly people like your father take in these things rather slowly, you know."

"I have taken my resolution," said her son. "My conscience is perfectly satisfied. I cannot allow myself to be thwarted when I am in the right."

"And what may that resolution be?" said his father, looking round at him.

"To marry her, sir."

"What! without my consent?"

"I hope not, sir."

"You hope not! That is to say, I may give it if I like, and if I don't, why the devil take it and me?"

"Very well, sir, if you drive me to it; I have won this girl's affection, and offered her my hand. I am pledged to marry her. To break my word to my equal in rank would be cruel, base, dishonorable; to do so to my inferior would be contemptible and vile. I shall never do it, father; you are not yourself if you require it. I shall marry Mary at all risks. You may destroy our happiness, but I shall at least preserve my honor."

"My dear Mr. Forrest ——" his wife began, but the old gentleman interrupted her.

"Stop, Nelly, you need not say a word. Come here, Anthony: you are a headstrong fellow, sir; you are a spoilt child, and you'll have to suffer for it to the end of your days. But there's a deal that's good about you, and I'm fool enough to be proud of you. If you like the girl marry her, sir; use her well, and God bless you."

Anthony was about to express his thanks.

"There's one consideration," said his father: "she must go to school first."

"To school, sir?"

"Yes, to school, sir; she's young enough, and it must be done. She may be pretty and clever, and all that, but a lady in manners she can't be. Your wife, Anthony, must be a lady, if you're to live happily with her after the honeymoon. I know you, my lad, and for half a kingdom I wouldn't see you with a wife you were ashamed of. She must go to a first-rate ladies' school. If she's quick, as you say, a year or two may do

wonders, and when you can bring her in to dinner and see her go out without a blush for her, she shall be yours."

Some resistance was made by the son; but the proposal was too sensible to be withstood. It was agreed that Mary should be sent to school for one year; that Anthony should return to Wales in a few days to get her parents' consent, about which, indeed, there could be no hesitation; and that as soon as the needful arrangements could be made, Mrs. Forrest herself should fetch her intended daughter-in-law and should convey her to the house where she was to receive her education as a lady.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### STEPPING STONES.

In the dew of a spring morning, Mary Griffiths crossed the little meadows, and the stepping stones, and walked slowly by the brook. The sun was up. His rays were streaming through the wild pass, like God's word through a heathen nation. Anthony Forrest was to come that afternoon. She had a letter from him the day before; the first he had written to her. She walked a little way with her head bent down; with her lips shut and pouting prettily, and maiden-thoughts heavy on her forehead. She stopped, and looked back at her father's cottage. It was one of the best in the valley, and was a pretty object in many of its home scenes. It was built by the road-side, of large stones, roughly whitewashed;

there was no window in front, but a wide gable, the slanting roof coming on one side nearly to the ground. On the other side, another smaller gable covered a deep porch, with tubs on its slated floor. Behind, a long building, like a transept, was added to the front piece. The roof was covered with heavy slates, and ridged with tiles, and gray mossy lines here and there were on the thick stone chimney and the walls.

Mary looked tenderly, even tearfully, at her home. She did not sigh, however. Anthony's letter was in her hand. She glanced down at it and smiled. Then she turned again, and continued her walk, looking at the brook where the sunshine sparkled and bright bars swung to and fro on the pebbly bottom. Coming to a little inlet where the water lay quiet, as in a pool, and the reflection was clear as that of a looking-glass, she stopped and bent over it.

"I see everything," she said to herself. "How clear it is!"

Her face was there, to the minutest line; she

saw her secret thoughts in her own eyes. The ground did not tremble, nor the wind stir, and the liquid mirror, though moving slowly round towards the current of the stream, was undisturbed by the imperceptible motion. She raised her head and looked up at the mountains.

"Why does it burden me?" she said again. Once more her eyes fell upon the water, and she continued pondering over the perfect truthfulness of the image it received. "It must be right—it ought to be so—I am sorry—I am sorry."

A shade of regret came over her soft round cheeks, and this time she really sighed. She turned and walked slowly homewards. At the stepping stones Owen Williams met her. She bade him "Good morning," and would have passed, but he stood in her way.

"Are you going to let me speak?" said he, in his dogged voice, with slouched hat, and hands in his pockets.

"If you have anything to say, Mr. Williams," said Mary, timidly, and wishing herself at home.

"I've got this to say; you've made my life bitter. I was good enough for you, and you ought to have had me. If I cut my throat, you'll have murdered me, so help me God!"

"You can't say so, Owen! You are cruel; I never harmed you, and never would."

"You've never harmed me? Didn't I say I'd have you, and didn't you tell me I shouldn't?"

"I couldn't help it, Owen Williams; it was no fault of mine. You know I was very sorry."

"You're proud, Mary Griffiths; that's it; you're proud. You've got this young fellow with his fine coat and dandy boots, and can't look at your equals. But you'll repent it; see if you don't. He's bought you, I say. It's his money you care for. You think he'll marry you, but you're a fool. He'll just be the ruin of you."

"For shame, Mr. Williams," cried Mary, blushing scarlet. "If you think that of me I wonder what you came courting for!"

"I'll not come courting again, I can tell you. He may have you and welcome; and I wish he

may serve you out. I'll be rich, too, one of these days. It's in me and I'll do it. I'll make my fortune, and when I do get a wife, it shall be a better than you, Mary Griffiths."

"I hope it will, Owen Williams. Let me go over the stones. I don't want to think worse of you than I need."

"Think what you like, and tell the young fellow, too. It won't be the first time he'll have heard of me; nor the last neither."

He said this, calling after her as she crossed the brook. Mary did not look back, but hastened to the cottage. Owen Williams turned suddenly away, but there was still a human heart under his coarseness and cruelty, and when Mary was out of sight he sat down and cried. That same afternoon he was seen with a bundle on his back walking alone up the pass. In a day or two it was found that he had left his work without assigning any reason, and had entirely disappeared. Some said he had enlisted; some, that his father was dead at Milford Haven, and that he had inherited five hundred pounds. Nobody seemed

to know, however; and nobody regretted him, except a poor sickly boy in the slate quarry, to whom he had taken a fancy and had been very kind in a surly way.

Anthony Forrest arrived towards evening, as had been expected, and after seeing him refreshed Mrs. Griffiths directly found it necessary to go to her husband who was in the fields, leaving Mary and her lover alone together in the parlor, at the same time instructing Jenny to continue her washing in the little back room, and not to leave the house until her mistress returned.

Mary, with blushing cheeks, took a seat by the window where she could see an occasional passer-by. There was a geranium on the low window-sill which gave occupation to her hands, as there had once been a decayed leaf upon it, and she had reason to think a very diligent search might bring her on the traces of another. Mr. Forrest left his seat and stood near her. He was not quite comfortable, and his face would have shown it to a close observer. But Mary for some time after his arrival was

disposed to look at anything rather than his face. Many shy glances she stole, indeed, under the half raised eyelids, and when by pure accident she found him just before her; but her fixed regards were given to other things—her hand, certain of the window panes, objects on one side of her, or deeply hidden in the ground; towards these she gazed steadfastly, but they told her none of her lover's secrets.

Before leaving home the post had brought him Mrs. Fraser's anonymous letter: it read thus,—

"Mary Griffiths is deceiving you. She may seem honest, but she knows more than she will tell."

"Pshaw!" said Anthony, and threw it in the fire. "This is Owen Williams' doing," he thought; but as it burnt away he fancied Williams was not likely to write so good a hand, and he began to feel annoyed. "It's not Williams; it's Mrs. Fraser. No; it was a man's hand. Nonsense! Am I going to listen to anonymous slanders?"

But feeling himself baffled as to its author, his

anger rose and his irritation was at first extreme. He had the greatest confidence in his own judgment, and his judgment had pronounced Mary an innocent and guileless girl. Who ventured to deny what he had affirmed, and to mix, a second time, the idea of doubt with the image of her in his heart? By degrees the doubt, from being an idea only, became more or less a fact. Not that he recognised it as such, but questions as to the probabilities of Mary's secret life began to occur to him. She was pretty: she might have been tempted. He was rich: she might have designed to win him by an assumed simplicity. Reports against her had reached him now from two different and apparently unconnected sources. There might be a fact at the bottom of them. He answered all such suggestions with a peremptory No! but, as usual, they came again, and his peace of mind was for the time disturbed. He went on his journey, however, resolved to question Mary more closely than usual, and trusting to his sagacity to detect the presence of any taint that could possibly have touched her.

The first sight of her that afternoon made a great deal of difference. He did not find his questions answered, but he forgot them as soon as he saw her. He was very much in love, and if Mary had only known it, she might have done whatever she pleased with him in the first half hour after his arrival. By the time they were alone together he was returning, however, to a more judicial frame of mind.

"Mary," he said, "we must begin to talk of business. In the first place my parents make no objection to our marriage. They will receive you as their daughter-in-law."

"That is very kind of them, sir."

"They make one condition, which I confess was rather annoying to me, but feeling them to be in the right, I could not of course oppose them. They desire that you should go for a year to a first-rate ladies' school."

Mary blushed rather painfully. She felt reminded of the difference between them, and was at the moment afraid to speak, lest she should say something vulgar.

"Of course," Anthony continued, "you have lived all your life in the country, and there are many things in the habits and customs of a town that can't be learnt among these mountains. You would feel uncomfortable if you were ignorant of them; and at a good English school they will be acquired easily."

This view of the case was so consolatory that Mary brightened up, and answered—

"Oh, I shall be very glad indeed. I think your parents are very right, sir."

"I'm glad to hear you say so. My mother will select the school, and will come and take you to it when the arrangements are made. Our marriage will take place at the end of a year, which I shall think an eternity."

"It will not be too long, sir, for me to make myself fit to be your wife."

"I am sure you will use it well, Mary, and if you do, my happiness will be unalloyed. Indeed, the only thing that could interfere with it now would be if you should cease to trust me entirely —if any want of confidence on your part should

creep in between us. I fear nothing of the kind, but, as your future husband, I ought to caution you against so serious an infraction of a wife's duty."

Mary looked up brightly.

"Thank you, for saying so. I wish to confide in you. I think my heart should be quite open to you, and I wish to tell you my secrets."

Anthony's face brightened also at this announcement. He drew a chair towards her, and sat down.

"Speak without restraint," he said, "a husband is his wife's confessor, as well as her master, Tell me everything without reserve."

Mary looked again at the geranium.

"In the first place, I have had seven lovers."

"You may have had seventy, Mary, so that you listened to none of them."

"I did not listen to any of them; they called me proud, but I could not feel as if they were my equals, and I could not love them."

"Mr. Owen Williams was the name of one

of them, was it not?" asked Anthony, looking closely at her.

"Yes; he was the last. I liked him least of all, but I'm very sorry for him. He's very cross and hard, though he has been kind to a poor boy in the quarry, but I'm afraid he really cares about me, and will get into bad ways because I disappointed him."

"That's an affair for his own conscience. You were at liberty to refuse him, and are free from responsibility as to the result."

"I believe I am, but it pains me all the same. I hope that does not displease you."

"Not in the least: it is an excellent trait of character. A woman cannot be too susceptible, where the feelings of others are concerned. I'm glad to hear you gave no encouragement to any of your seven lovers. Are you quite sure of it?"

"Quite sure," Mary answered, looking at him again, and her face was so guileless, and unembarrassed in its expression, that his remaining doubts vanished. Mary however turned away

her face, and looked down timidly as she continued:

"I never could have loved any of them; but I was in love myself once; at least, I think I was."

Anthony frowned at this intelligence. He saw no advantage in a rival, and he did not quite understand her.

"That's singular," said he; "you have just assured me of your indifference to all your seven lovers."

"Yes; he was not one of them. He was a stranger from England; his parents brought him here because he was ill, and they had lodgings for a whole summer in the village."

"Worse and worse," Mr. Forrest thought, growing warm, and taking out his handkerchief.

"Where's this stranger now? What's become of him?"

"He died, sir."

"Excellent young man," thought her companion, but he was not yet quite at his ease on the subject. A rival in the grave was likely to

be quiet, but a romantic passion for his memory might be inconvenient.

"When did this take place?" he asked, slowly, wiping his lips. "Has it happened recently?"

"Not very. It happened when I was twelve years old."

Mr. Forrest put back his pocket handkerchief, smiled very pleasantly, and took her hand in an affectionate manner.

"Indeed, my dear Mary, if that is all you have to confess, we have spent too much time over it already. I began to fear something serious, but I am quite easy about your love affairs at twelve years old."

"I wished to tell you all my secrets, and this was the chief of them. I was very much in love; it was very silly, I dare say, but I thought of it for a long time, and was unhappy till I knew you, on account of it. I have only one thing more to say," she added; "I have one secret that I cannot tell you. It's of no consequence, but I must not say what it is."

Anthony grew dark again; he even dropped

her hand. The veins on it seemed to have formed themselves into the words "Mary Griffiths is deceiving you."

"How can it be, Mary, that there is anything you must not tell me? The thing is out of the question."

"I've promised, sir, that I would never tell anyone. I'm very sorry I did so; but I didn't think about the confidence there should be between us till I began to feel there was something in my mind I might not tell you. Then it pained me directly, but I had given my word."

"And I exonerate you from your promise, Mary."

"Can you do so?" She looked, doubtfully, at him.

"Certainly I can. I have a husband's right over you, and it is above every other claim."

"Is it above my promise, sir?"

"Your promise, Mary, is, or at least will be, to obey me. Scripture and the law define your duty to be the same. Without even insisting on obedience in this case, I may claim as much from

your respect. In deference to my judgment, you doubtless ought to relate this secret to me, for my opinion is that your promise in such a case is not binding."

Mary's face looked troubled.

"I wish I could obey you; I've never studied these things. I know I ought to take your judgment."

"How can you hesitate? When I have no doubt in the matter, ought you not to be immediately satisfied?"

"I never broke my word in all my life," poor Mary answered, with tears starting to her eyes; "I never made a promise without keeping it, and it seems—I can't tell you how dreadful it seems! The more I think of it the more it pains my heart!"

"This is all weakness, Mary. This is want of confidence in my decision."

"Oh, sir," she cried, seizing his hand, and the tears now falling in earnest, "don't ask me to do it. I can't resist you, if you make it your command, but you would be sorry always afterwards.

I should have broken my word; I should feel disgraced and humbled; you would have caused me bitter pain, and after all, when you heard this secret, you would find it was of no consequence to either of us. It has troubled me very much. At last I resolved to do what I have done, and, as I couldn't tell you what it was, at least to tell you I had it. I thought this would be better than saying nothing and hiding it altogether."

Anthony did not answer immediately. His desire to hear her secret was great; his impatience of opposition to what he regarded as his just authority was great also. His doubts had been partially revived, and their mere existence irritated him. But to look at the weeping girl and believe her insincere was next to impossible; to hear her sweet voice in tones of supplication without being moved by it, was not the attribute of a lover. No doubt she was speaking the truth. What she had to tell was probably only some foolish gossip of the village; even the promise to keep it secret was most likely of no more consequence than her girlish love affair. It was the very simplicity of her

nature that alone gave importance to any part of the transaction. Lastly, the still vivid remembrance of another quarrel and its consequences flushed his cheek, and checked the impatience of his will.

"Since you feel it so seriously," he said, after a pause, "I withdraw my questionings. Forget the secret if you can, Mary; and remember to make no more promises of the kind."

Mary's face was sunshine in a moment. She looked her best, and he was proud of her. She entered with winning interest into the arrangements he had to propose; and if uneasy thoughts again occurred to him, it was not till after he had left her. A few weeks afterwards Mary went to school; and as it was thought desirable that her studies should be uninterrupted, Mr. Anthony Forrest took a long journey on the Continent.

Now those who love flowers, but care nothing for the roots they grow on; those who listen passionately to the nightingale, but do not ask how his nest is made; those whose pleasure is to imagine life as a rainbow spanning the world, vivid in light and

color, but guiltless of foundation stones; those, in short, who read a book as they hunt a butterfly, for the wings only and the fluttering, may as well treat the next chapter as a bundle of blank pages. The pages are pretty full, but they tell only of a root, a nest, and a basement; things entirely useless to the butterfly hunter, although without them there would have been no story of Trust for Trust.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE BOROUGH WALL.

When Cæsar in the latter end of summer stood with his legions on the coast of Gaul, a forest of British Oak, in the heart of the island they were about to conquer, grew on the southern bank of a small river, and was the stronghold of a barbarian tribe. The river ran through a considerable plain, but on its northern bank there was a low hill, or rather a raised platform of sandstone rock, at the foot of which it flowed. Bending like a sickle, it embraced a portion of the rock, which rose higher than the rest, overlooking the trees on the other side of the river. Opposite to this eminence, however, the southern bank rose gradually, in a line parallel with the stream, till it reached a height nearly equal to that of the sandstone platform, and then declined

again in like manner to the usual level of the plain, so that at one point the river flowed between two perpendicular walls about sixty feet high, where a bridge might have been thrown across with ease by a modern architect. About five hundred yards east of this point, at the spot where the bank began to rise, the river, being wider and shallower than usual, was fordable at most seasons; and as here the sandstone rock opposite sloped a little down to the water, instead of rising abruptly from it, this ford was the usual crossing-place for those who lived in the neighbourhood. Near the ford, a portion of the forest was enclosed by a ditch and a rough wooden fence, and within it, among the trees, were a number of round huts, their walls a kind of rude basket-work, plastered with clay, and whitewashed; their roofs, made of straw, conical in shape, and answering the purpose of a chimney. This was the chief city of the tribe who inhabited the forest. Here warriors clustered round their chief for battle, or returned with him for security. Here Druids taught, and judged, and sacrificed, and Britain

savagely nursed her elder children, preparing them for the destiny that was to grow up with the acorns shaken that very autumn to the ground.

This forest stronghold fell before the Romans. They crossed the river, and established a camp on the sandstone hill. As time went on, the camp became a town, while the huts on the other bank disappeared. When Alfred drove the Danes back to their ships and their own melancholy coasts, he found this town in ruins, and rebuilt it, for the inhabitants had fought bravely for him and lost their all. He granted privileges to it, and it prospered. When William of Normandy had become William the Conqueror, he bestowed it on one of his nobles, Hugo Rougemains by name, who had with his battleaxe demolished a strong stockade on the field of Hastings. It was a Borough now. No authority had the King's Sheriff over the freemen residing within its walls. No jurisdiction might be exercised over them but that of their own lawful courts. They paid no toll in passing through the King's do-

minions; and the wise Norman continued and even extended these immunities, granted by the Saxon Kings. A Charter of Privileges, confirming all the former rights of the Borough, was given by King Henry the Second, and King John added the grant of an annual fair. From Henry the Sixth it obtained a Charter of Incorporation, one of the first, giving to its mayor and burgesses the pomp and circumstance of an embodied personality, qualified to hold and to grant possession, to sue and to be sued. From time immemorial it had sent Burgesses to the National Parliament, but during the Wars of the Roses, having generally espoused the unsuccessful side, the town decayed, and became so far impoverished that the wages paid to its representatives began to be felt as burdensome, and by degrees the privilege was allowed to drop. In those good old times, indeed, the functions of the King's Parliament men were not greatly different from those performed by the cattle of the King's dairy—both being brought together with noise and hubbub at milking time, and dismissed again, with a kick perhaps, immediately

after the squeezing of their udders. Indeed the cattle had the best of it, for they parted with what they would not willingly have retained, while the lieges found their burdens only the heavier when the King's pails were filled. The British House of Commons, however—indigenous to the soil, and the stubbornest weed in Christendom, resisting the plough and the scuffle, choking the foreign herbage sown over it, and tripping up Majesty itself, when, armed with weapons of extermination, it has trusted its sacred feet among the pricks and the tangle—had not only survived the storms of civil war, but stoutly began to grow again as soon as the air was quiet. Under good Queen Bess the representatives of shires and towns were found willing to wear their dignities at their own costs and charges, instead of receiving wages from their constituents as heretofore, and the inhabitants of the old Borough forthwith thought it worth their while to revive again their abandoned franchise. When the Queen was dead, the House of Stuart found the town a loyal one. It fought for that race of demigods; was battered by Cromwell's

cannon; revived again at the Restoration. When pious King Charles the Second, yearning, like most of his sacred name, to save his country from the curse of freedom, demanded from his boroughs the surrender of their ancient charters, the loyal town was one of those which submitted to the Lord's anointed. When his excellent brother James, willing to blot out the sin of hating him from the record of his people's crimes, proclaimed at the eleventh hour the restoration of all that had been surrendered, his royal bounty was received with fitting gratitude. The Borough had from that time maintained a steady course of improvement; its inhabitants increasing annually, and each generation becoming prouder of its history, its relics, its modern progress, and its old name of Porchester.

This name, indeed, had become the subject of inquiries so profound, discussions so warm, and finally, of differences so important in the politics of the place, that I must carefully inform the reader of the nature of these questions, and of the matters thereon depending. It will be neces-

sary, first, however, to describe the good town itself with somewhat of minuteness, and this I shall do with the less scruple, as it was the scene of most of the events I shall have henceforth to record. The town then, which contained about twenty thousand souls, was built, it will be remembered, on the flat top of the low sandstone hill, partly encircled by the river running past its base on the southern side, and dividing it from the extensive plain below. The southern entrance, which was the principal one, was at the old ford already described. Here the high road from London, after traversing the plain, crossed the river at its broadest and shallowest point, a solid stone bridge having been built there in the reign of Queen Anne. After crossing the bridge, you found yourself immediately in the High Street of the town, built of tall brick houses and paved with large stones. The street was straight for a short distance, ascending the hill, which, as has been said before, rose less abruptly from the river at this point than at most others. Then you turned suddenly at right angles to the left, con-

tinuing the ascent in this direction till the highest point was gained, when a second bend, equally sudden, and to the right this time, brought the street back to its original direction, and it passed thus to the centre of the town. In this centre was a large, oblong, open market-place. The High Street entered it at one of the angles. In the middle of the opposite side was the chief hotel; near one of the corners stood the market cross, a circular, open building, raised three steps from the ground, and formed of half-a-dozen stone pillars supporting a dome-shaped roof. The other buildings were chiefly shops, with here and there a private house among them. On the western side of the market-place the Bank stood, between a lawyer's office and a grammar-school, and at the other end, the Town Hall. Two other streets branched off; one from the angle behind the cross; the other from the middle of the eastern side.

The principal traffic of the place passed along the High Street, and it will be perceived that by reason of the two sudden bends in the

rapid descent towards the bridge, the risk of accidents to carts, carriages, and passengers was very considerable. In point of fact, the number of such occurrences was alarming, and had for years been on the increase, as the business of the borough, and the consequent crowding of its chief thoroughfare, became annually greater. In the course of one disastrous year, there had been five coroner's inquests upon as many bodies of the inhabitants, who had met their death in various ways on the Bridge Hill, as it was called. The dangers of this main street had often occupied the attention of the burgesses, and many town councillors had owed their seats to the pledges they gave of adherence to various plans proposed from time to time for the abatement of the evil. It proved, however, as tough a case as ever local parliament had to deal with. The natural difficulties of the site were very great, and when added to those arising from the opposite interests involved in every scheme of alteration, they had proved for many years to be insurmountable.

Of all the plans suggested hitherto, one had recommended itself especially to the most philanthropic, and best provided for, of the burgesses. It was proposed to turn the London road to the left, outside the town, before it reached the present bridge, and to carry it up the gradual ascent along the southern bank of the river. Having arrived at the top of this ascent, where the ground on that side reached the height of the opposite sandstone hill, this new road was to turn again to the right, and to cross the river by a new bridge to be thrown at this point over the ravine. The town would thus be entered by a straight road and a level one; the two bends and the whole of the ascent being outside, where everything could be seen at once, and no longer in the main street, where the tall houses blocked up the view of all beyond the turning.

On the hypothesis that the saving of life and limb were the chief ends of road-making, there could be no question about the advantages of this plan over every other which the nature of the ground made practicable, but the moment of its

proposal witnessed also the birth of a most violent and determined opposition. All the tradesmen in the High Street were found to be dead against it. With a singular coincidence of judgment, rarely found in the common affairs of life, they discovered to a man that the foundation stone of the new bridge would commemorate the destruction of Porchester, that the present entrance was the source of its prosperity, and that any councillor who voted for the proposed alteration would be totally unworthy of their votes or interest for the remainder of his natural life. In addition, they gave it as their decided opinion, and to this three architects' names were attached, that from the character of the soil no stable bridge could be erected at the spot suggested, and that any vehicles or other moveables attempting to cross such a structure would certainly bring about a catastrophe of horror, and be found, bridge and all, at the bottom of the river, which ran sixty feet below.

It may be doubted whether this opposition, violent as it was, would have been successful if

unaided, but the tradesmen of the High Street had powerful friends.

On the town side, at the spot where the new bridge was to cross, there was a large field, which had never been built upon, and in it was the chief curiosity, the most precious relic, the pride and boast of Porchester. It was a large mass of masonry, about fifty feet long and nearly half as high, the remains of a still larger pile from which the rest had been rudely broken off, leaving everything jagged and irregular. It was composed of stones, large and small, granite, slate, and limestone, with a mixture of red Roman tiles thrown in; all being cemented together with strong gritty mortar. Four arches of unequal width penetrated about half way through the thick wall, forming so many alcoves in it. They were turned carefully with thin, broad tiles, placed edgeways, and black with age and exposure, except where some comparatively recent breakage showed their original red. The back of one arch was filled in with concentric layers of these tiles, looking in their broken state like the remains of a gigantic ammonite.

Yellow wall-flowers, dandelions, and tufts of grass, grew on the rude ledges, and in the many crevices of the rough old wall. On the top of it, two lilacs, purple and white, had found soil enough to grow in, and every spring the perfume of their blossoms might be smelt round the jagged ruin. At the western end, there was a sudden depression of the ground, to the depth of several feet, and old hawthorn bushes grew and flowered on the lower level. This memorial of ancient times, of former conquest, of Roman glories, and the deep meanings of British history, was regarded with almost religious awe by every antiquarian in Porchester. It stood about twenty yards from the precipitous bank overlooking the river. Ivy had overgrown it; three ash-trees grew before it, on the side of the town. The field, which was irregular in shape, but perfectly level, except at the end of the ruins, was surrounded by tall elms on every side but that of the river bank. These made it a secluded and beautiful meadow, open to the south, entered by a gate on the opposite side, and commanding from

its position many fine views across the plain. A stout railing gave protection from the danger of slipping down the bank; the water ran rapidly below—briars, gorse bushes, and fern leaves hanging over it; rooks cawed in the high elms, and nothing indicated the close proximity of a manufacturing town, except the occasional wreaths of smoke from one or two chimneys, tall enough to be barely seen over the trees.

This field, with the ruins it contained, was the private property of Mr. Forrest, the banker; and had been for many years in the possession of his family, but immemorial usage had given a right of entrance to all who wished to visit the Borough Wall, and the individual good nature of the present owner had thrown it entirely open to the public on Sunday afternoons, and on all other occasions when space was wanted for a fête or a public holiday-making. For the rest, the grass was kept in good order, and archery and cricket clubs were allowed to make use of it in summer.

Now to construct the proposed new road it

would have been absolutely necessary to pull down the Borough Wall and destroy the meadow, and it was this that gave such powerful aid to the arguments of the High Street tradesmen.

The antiquarians of the town were horror-struck, the archers and cricketers were alarmed, the working people in general bethought them of their pleasant holidays, and on this evidence made up their minds; and, not less important perhaps as a practical fact, Mr. Forrest, the actual possessor, fond of his meadow, and proud of the opportunities it gave him of making himself popular, declared that nothing but an Act of Parliament should ever bring the road over his ground.

So the matter stood with regard to the road; and having introduced the reader to the town itself, and one portion of its politics, I shall be better able to explain that other portion in which its name was especially concerned.

The existence of so remarkable a piece of antiquity as the Borough Wall was in itself sufficient to awaken an archæological spirit in the

breasts of the inhabitants, and accordingly every well-informed person among them, whether male or female, knew more or less about Roman camps, Celtic weapons, and the habits of the Saxons. In the researches of the most learned, the origin of the name of Porchester had naturally occupied a good deal of attention, but instead of a satisfactory agreement there arose a violent dispute, which, to all appearance, might last as long as the town itself. Two principal theories were started and maintained. The latter part of the name presented no difficulty; the place had doubtless been a fortified camp; but while one party among the inquirers derived the first syllable from the word "Porticus," a porch, they were opposed by an equally strong division, who found its origin in the word "Porcus," a pig. The arguments of the first were in this wise: The Borough Wall, said they, was part of the porch, or entrance, of a great Roman temple. The temple had been destroyed early. The porch remained standing; from its size, beauty, and situation, it became a noted object in the neighbourhood, and naturally enough

the name of Porchester—the walled city of the porch, was originated.

In opposition to this view of the case it was denied that the famous ruins formed any portion of a Roman temple, and as to the porch of a temple, they were said to be utterly destitute of any resemblance to it. The name, said these objectors, has a totally different origin. The plain below was once covered with a forest of oaks. On the acorns of this forest a multitude of swine were fed. The place became famous for its Pork, and the prefix to its name commemorates this celebrity. Hereupon ensued a conflict of opinions, which was carried on with so much vigor and learning, that the adherents of the two hostile theories received party names, and became consolidated into distinct sects, concerning their antiquarian faith. The advocates of the temple derivation were known as Porticites, while their opponents bore the title of Porcites; and these names, though given partly in derision, were soon adopted as badges of honorable distinction. The dispute had many branches. The

Porcite argument was so managed as to involve a question about the date at which the pig became domesticated in England; while, on the other side, the peculiarities of Roman architecture had to be determined, and the result defended. Both parties appealed to the Town Seal in support of their pretensions. On the obverse it bore unmistakably a boar's head, and this was regarded as the stronghold of the Porcite argument. On the reverse, however, was an enigmatical figure, composed of three straight and two crooked lines, which was declared by the Porticites to represent the porch of a temple. The weight of evidence in this respect would thus have rested in exact equilibrium, but that, while the boar's head could not be denied, the resemblance of the aforesaid lines to a porch or any other part of a temple was disputed no less vigorously than the fact concerning the Borough Wall itself. This figure, said the Porcites, instead of being a porch, is manifestly a bridge over a ravine, and commemorates the existence of such a structure in former days at the spot

whereon the proposed alterations in the road would again require one. The Porticites naturally opposed this theory with the warmest indignation; and the question whether such a bridge had ever existed, became in consequence one of the hottest points of controversy. The final result was not a little curious. What had been an antiquarian distinction only, grew into a political one, and Porticite and Porcite became the names of the two great parties into which the town was divided. For the Bridge Hill dispute was always pending. It was animated with new life by every fatal accident; as if the souls of the departed entered into it as into another body on leaving their broken tenements of clay; a species of metempsychosis the possibility of which as a matter of fact might be referred to certain of our great thinkers and metaphysicians. For if a solid may be merely an idea, it seems very fair to suppose also that an idea may be merely a solid. Or again, if matter can have ideas without a soul, it must be difficult to deny that ideas may have substance without a body. However this may be,

it is certain that an influx of active life might be felt and seen in the quarrel about the dangerous street, whenever a new victim was offered up on its paving stones. Now, with those who were opposed to any alteration, it was a favorite argument to affirm that, from the peculiarities of the site, a safe bridge could not be constructed over the ravine. To admit that the Town Seal bore the effigy of such a bridge was to acknowledge its former existence. To say that what had once been built could not now be restored, was paradoxical; and they were reduced therefore, of necessity, to a denial of the whole theory about the bridge, effigy and all. To do this, however, was practically to believe in the Portico, and a consistent advocate of the present state of things on Bridge Hill became a Porticite by the force of logical necessity.

There was considerable confusion, it is true, when the matter first assumed this phase, for during a long lull in the agitation of the subject, many persons had espoused the Porcite theory without perceiving whither it might lead them.

When it became evident that a consistent Porcite must also be an advocate of the proposed New Street with all its consequences, a sudden reconsideration of the archæological evidence occurred. On the one hand, there were found among the staunchest of the Porticites, who ought to be the opponents of the change, certain persons who had reason to think the alteration would increase the value of their land; certain architects, who foresaw the building of new houses; several lawyers, who took pleasure in conveyancing; and the landlord of a very quiet inn at some distance from the present thoroughfare, but in a direct line between the Borough Wall and the market-place. On the other hand, the Porcite school numbered among its old adherents some highly respectable tradesmen of the High Street, the best batsman among the cricketers, and a few resolute sticklers for things as they are, whatever that might happen to be. All of these renewed the inquiry with ardor, and a rapid change of opinions took place on the antiquarian question. There was some bashfulness and a

good deal of satire on the occasion, but after a time the sect of Porcites became identical with the promoters of the new road; that of the Porticites, with its adversaries.

The doctors of the town were almost the only individuals who were not openly attached to one party or the other. They, as is their wont in political affairs, looked at the matter from a judicial point of view; that is, they heard both sides and deferred their judgment. It was currently whispered, indeed, that they were in secret strongly opposed to the alteration—considering the accidents on the Bridge Hill as events of the highest value to a science for whose advancement they were ready at any moment to lay down the lives of their best friends. But these whispers were undoubtedly libellous; and I have never heard that they were even proved to be true by evidence satisfactory to a jury. In the meantime, through the whole debate, there remained a satirical few who, whenever the name of Porcite or of Porticite, or any question as to the origin of the name of Porchester, came to

be mentioned, invariably shrugged their shoulders, curled their lips, and, either from the profundity of their own knowledge or the depth of their ignorance, muttered something contemptible in the extreme about Learning and Latin in the provinces.

## CHAPTER X.

### A SIGN OF PROMISE.

The reader who has not already acquired a pretty accurate notion of the local politics detailed in the last chapter may set his heart at rest concerning one point in his future destiny.

He may have been born to be hanged, to head the British army, or to write a novel; in fact, to fill any office for which a certain thickness in the frontal and parietal bones of the head offers no particular disqualification; but he has not been born to settle the Bridge Hill controversy or to become the leading man in Porchester. Were he even predestined to this honorable post in terms as stringent as the book of fate can bear without collapsing, he would find his right to it disputed nevertheless, and by no meaner rival

than Mr. David Hornbeam, builder and town councilman, the present leader of the Porcite faction, which he already knows to be identical with the promoters of the new road.

About a year after Mary Griffiths had been removed from her native valley, Mr. Hornbeam, one morning in the early summer, walked out before breakfast to look after his workmen who were building a factory chimney, and having corrected a mistake in the scaffolding and blown up two or three carters who were late with their materials, he strolled onwards towards the quiet inn already mentioned, whose landlord was of his own way of thinking in regard to the Bridge Hill. Mr. Hornbeam was a tall thin man, with large lips, and lungs like a catapult; for when charged with words, and properly expanded, they hurled forth the shot with force sufficient to pierce the uproar of a popular meeting, or, in still weather, to hold the whole area of the market-place within its range. Through the sheer vigor of his voice he had gained a high position in municipal affairs; people listened to

him the more willingly because when he was speaking there was not the least occasion to strain their necks, to put their hands to their ears, or to be angry if a pin fell. When not a word was audible in the speeches of his opponents, not one was lost of his answers to them, and these answers appeared accordingly to be conclusive in the highest degree. Indeed, when after half an hour of inarticulate tumult, the words "Mr. Chairman" are distinctly heard, rising over all in clear victorious utterance, the ear experiences a relief like that of which the eye is conscious when, on a railway journey, rushing between close banks, where nothing is apparent but indistinguishable lines in chaotic motion, a sudden vista opens, and a tree is seen standing still at the bottom of a field. The traveller, charmed with the quiet landscape, thinks it more excellent than usual, and in like manner the listener catching the sound of his mother's tongue again, is ready enough to believe the argument as powerful as the voice that utters it.

Mr. Hornbeam had other elements of popular success in him. Those brazen gates by which the meaning of a hostile argument may be excluded from the understanding, were in his case very strong indeed; nor had he ever been careless enough to leave them open when the enemy was abroad. The result of this was a solidity of conviction with regard to his own opinions, which gave him a great advantage over those who, thinking it possible they might be in the wrong, produced their views with a hesitation unknown to Mr. Hornbeam. He was besides this an energetic man, and a successful one in his business, and seemed on the whole to have as good a chance of becoming King of Porchester as any commoner could desire.

The inn towards which he was now walking stood just outside the town, in a quiet road leading westward. Few houses could be seen from it, and there were fields in front and on either side. It was a square brick house, with a door in the middle, and over the door, besides the lawful inscription of "Richard Fowkes, licensed, &c.,"

was a long board bearing a curious sign. The sign consisted of four figures with four mottos under them. The figures were those of a king, an admiral, a bishop, and a farmer. Their mottos, in the same order, read respectively, "I govern all," "I fight for all," "I pray for all," "I pay for all," and the inn was known as the Four All's, in consequence. The painting of the figures may be imagined by those familiar with similar works of art, especially when mellowed down by time, and worked upon by those great picture cleaners the sun and rain. The artist's power had been chiefly thrown on the last figure, that of the farmer, on whose jolly face he had labored hard to impress a certain air of slyness and a wink of the eye, as if he were enjoying the wit and satire of the whole conception, which was concentrated in himself and his motto. The house looked shabby, as indeed it had a right to do, for smartness and gentility are meant to be looked at, and the road was so quiet that they would have been thrown away upon it.

In the open doorway, with his legs pretty wide

apart, and his hands in his pockets, the landlord stood breathing the morning air. He was something like his own farmer's figure in the sign above—tall and stout, capacious below the waist, and of a red complexion. He looked like a good-hearted fellow, a little soured; for which, indeed, he had two good reasons. The first was in his matrimonial arrangements, but on these, being personal matters, I will not enlarge. The second lay in his declining circumstances, and the bitterness of hope deferred. He had taken the Four All's from a man whom it had already ruined, believing himself, through his acquaintance with Mr. Hornbeam, to be in possession of an important secret, namely, that the scheme for the new road would shortly be carried; that an Act of Parliament would be procured; that the quiet inn would find itself in the middle of the chief thoroughfare; and that he should make his fortune.

This had happened four years ago, and in that time the scheme, instead of being carried, had been temporarily dropped. Mr. Fowkes began to find that quarter-day came inexorably round

without the least compunction for him; and that Fortune, if indeed she meant to have him at last, was keeping him waiting a confounded length of time, and plaguing the very life out of him.

"Well, Fowkes," said Mr. Hornbeam, coming up the road, and stopping before the doorway, "how do you do this morning?"

"Why, well enough, Mr. Hornbeam, but plaguey cross."

"Just parted company with Mrs. Fowkes, eh? You should have taken better care of yourself, and lived a bachelor like me."

"I'd take ten wives, Mr. Hornbeam, to get shut of the Four All's, and my money back. A wife's not half as bad as rent and taxes. She can't bother you all day long, whatever she does."

"Have patience, Fowkes; have patience. I would n't sell your lease for a thousand pounds."

"Will you buy it for five hundred now?" says Mr. Fowkes, energetically stretching out his hand.

"Well, that's another matter, but take my word for it the new road will be made. I've got news

about it. Do you know young Forrest's coming home next week?"

"No; I don't know and I don't care. He's done me the worst turn of any man living. Told his father I kept bad company in the house, and very near took my licence away."

"I know that, Fowkes; I know that. He's coming home to be married."

"Serves him right," said Mr. Fowkes. "Who's going to have him? I hope she'll give it him, that's all."

"It's some girl from a boarding school," replied the builder. "They've kept it very quiet, but we shall hear all about it soon. However, it matters little who it is. He's going to be married. Now, you see the wedding will give him and his father and a good many more of them enough to think of this summer, and the elections will be coming on before they've done with it. I'm going to work the thing as quietly as possible; we've almost a majority in the Council already. We'll turn out two of the other side, put in two of our own men, and the thing will be done. We shall

vote the new road, go to Parliament next year, and be at work in less than eighteen months. It's the nick of time, Fowkes, and just what I've been waiting for."

The landlord looked rather woeful: "Eighteen months! that's six rent days," said he.

"Oh," said Mr. Hornbeam, cheerfully, "you'll pull along, you know; we shall have our meetings at the Four All's, and talking is dry work. I came to see you, Fowkes, to tell you about it, and I want you to have the parlor quiet for us next Tuesday at six. Not a word, you know; we must keep still, and the day's ours."

Mr. Fowkes brightened at the prospects of a succession of committee meetings in his parlor. The arrangements were soon made, and he was entering into close political converse with the builder when an interruption put an end to it for that morning.

"Fowkes!" cried a shrill voice from the interior. He looked over his shoulder.

"Well, what's up?"

"Fowkes!"

"Well, I say; what's up?"

"What the mischief do you stand shouting for? Here's the beer running out like mad, and I wish I may die if I know how to stop it!"

"God bless my life!" cried the landlord, turning suddenly, and disappearing down his cellar stairs.

Mr. Hornbeam smiled after him, chuckled, and walked home to his bachelor breakfast.

## CHAPTER XI.

### BOWS AND ARROWS.

Mr. Anthony Forrest was coming home, as Mr. Hornbeam had affirmed, and was coming home to be married. When Mary Griffiths had been a year at school, she was fetched away by her future mother-in-law, who took her to her own house, and at once introduced her to the society of Porchester. This had been arranged from the first, and Mrs. Forrest would not have broken faith with her son on any consideration; but it must be confessed that when it came to the point she was not a little nervous about Mary's introduction, and greatly feared to find her committing herself by some ludicrous vulgarity before the searching eyes of the Porchester ladies. Mary, however, had nothing vulgar in her nature, and had made such good use of her time

at school, that there was little either in speech or manner to distinguish her as one of plebeian birth. Her accomplishments, indeed, were few, and of necessity imperfect; and her knowledge of life, in the fashionable sense, had not yet had so much as a beginning; but on the whole she was a very presentable person, especially when her good looks were taken into account; her youth made inexperience excusable, and there was a certain reticence in her character, which kept her from placarding her want of knowledge on everything she saw or spoke of—an occupation industriously followed by many, who might appear sufficiently well-informed in most matters if they could only be selfish enough to keep their information to themselves. This, however, would lessen the amount of talking in the world, and human speech, be it good or bad, is oil upon the wheels of life, which soon go heavily when we stop its flowing. I abstain, therefore, from making any recommendation on the subject. The world is full of sacrificial offerings, and a credit for profundity, when laid down to redeem us from

the great monster Silence, is to be accepted with the rest.

Mr. and Mrs. Forrest, senior, had lived over the Bank in the market-place for many years. It was arranged that Anthony and his wife should occupy this house hereafter, while the old people removed to a villa about a mile out of the town. The Banker had built it several years before, but had never made up his mind to live there until his son's approaching marriage rendered a decision necessary. He was no loser perhaps by the delay, for it had given time both to art and nature, and the two together had at last made his villa, with the surrounding pleasure-grounds, one of the pleasantest places in the neighbourhood. There were large trees about it now; shady walks, perfected roses, and full-bearing vines. The house was square and white, with wide overhanging eaves, and a verandah festooned by flowering creepers. Its chief fronts were to the south and west, from the latter of which there was a pleasant view of a range of hills, about three miles distant. The sun

went down behind them, flaming over each peak and ridge successively, from the winter to the summer solstice and back again. Here Mary was brought by Mrs. Forrest, and here she was to remain till her marriage took place; a fortnight being excepted, for the purpose of a farewell visit to her own parents.

"Anthony comes home about seven on Wednesday evening," said Mrs. Forrest, one morning at breakfast, after opening a letter she had just received. "He landed the day before yesterday at Dover; all safe, he says."

"And all in a hurry it seems," replied her spouse. "The rascal; I'd a week's work for him in town. It looks bad, Mary, very bad; you'll never hold him in. I'll swear, he means to run away with you."

Mary, who was sitting with them at the table, had blushed up to her eyes at the first announcement. She blushed down to her shoulders now, and said she was very glad Mr. Anthony was safe; in a voice not calculated to excite fears of rivalry in the breast of Mr. Hornbeam.

"Oh, he's safe enough, depend upon it," said the Banker. "He's got Cupid looking after him, and Hymen to back him, and half a dozen fairy godmothers, I'll be bound. Why, Nelly, Wednesday's the archery night: we must go. I laid a wager last week with Daniel Hobbes."

"That's out of the question; some one must be at home to receive Anthony. He has been a year away."

"So much the better, he shall have a novel reception. As for you and me, he won't care twopence about us till Thursday morning, and Mary will look just as well on the archery ground as under the verandah. He'll go to the Bank first to change his clothes, and I'll leave word we're in the Borough Wall meadow."

"Really," said his wife, hesitating; "it seems hardly comfortable for him."

"Comfortable! it's better than comfortable, there's romance in it. Mary looks uncommonly well in her hat; and as she can't shoot, he can have her all to himself. The plan's capital, Mrs. Forrest."

"Well," said the lady, "I don't know; perhaps it is. What do you say, Mary?"

Mary's heart had been going pretty fast, and the thought of meeting her lover in public had not much relief in it. She was unwilling, however, to oppose any arrangement made in her behalf, and had bravely resolved to do battle with her bashfulness, at every lawful opportunity. So she said she would do whatever Mr. and Mrs. Forrest thought best, whereupon Mr. Forrest patted her head good-naturedly, and his wife fell to considering how Mary should be dressed, and what other matters needed attention before her son's return.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE BOROUGH WALL MEADOW.

On Wednesday afternoon, about five o'clock, the targets were pitched in the Borough Wall meadow. Mr. and Mrs. Forrest, with Mary Griffiths, were first on the ground.

The Banker was very fond of his bow. He drew it as well as most men have cared to do since gunpowder took the reins of government into its sulphurous hands; was sceptical, however, as to the recorded feats of his ancestors; thought butt-shooting at two hundred and twenty yards a pretty theory, but not likely to be a pretty pastime, and chose rather to take his pleasure idly at about thirty paces from the target, with plenty of arrows in the red, and not much walking to do.

The afternoon was very fine, and the wind was still. "Just the day for us," said Mr. Forrest, as he strung his bow. "I shall win my wager with Hobbes." The Roman Ruin, streaked with long lines of shade where the light fell on blades of grass growing in its crevices, stood before them, partly hidden by the three ash-trees in front, and the view beyond it stretched out in evening colors to a blue horizon. The rooks were profoundly cawing round their nests, and the tops of the long chimneys gave out only light brown vapors, curving upwards and melting away.

"We must set Mary up with a bow," said the Banker, and he bade her try his own. Mary, bred among the mountains, knew how to use her arms; drew the bow stoutly, with more vigor than knowledge, and letting the string slip, bruised her wrist pretty severely. Mrs. Forrest was distressed, and was ready to carry her home, but Mary only laughed, and wrapped her handkerchief round her arm, much to the Banker's admiration.

"Ah," said he, "you girls shoot well enough in your own way. Straight to the heart; straight to the heart; and mankind in general for a target."

"We must shoot very badly," said Mary, "for we never mean to hit you when you say it's done."

She blushed at the idea of having said anything so fine to Mr. Forrest, for she was far from being at ease in his presence, yet. He patted her on the shoulder in a fatherly way. "True enough, my girl; true enough, as far as you know. But there's plenty of other archery in the world, as you'll grieve to find. String your bow, Nell; here they come;" and he turned to meet several people with bows in their hands, who began now to enter the field. Mary, squeezing her wrist now and then, prepared to encounter them, for she had not yet been introduced to them all, and was not a little nervous in the presence of strangers. Mr. Forrest's little bit of praise had encouraged her, however; the bruise itself had rather raised her spirits, and

she felt less terror than usual as they approached. Indeed, she had little reason for it to-day.

She was dressed in white, with an Indian scarf round her neck and a straw hat with blue ribbons on her head. Her hair, shining with the sunbeams, and almost like them, was loosely gathered up behind and fell again over her neck. The year at school had removed all traces of exposure from the natural fairness of her skin; her figure had grown rounder, but not less graceful, and the flushing of her face, if it took something from its delicacy, added more to its expression.

Mrs. Forrest looked and felt proud of her, as she introduced her to the first comers.

"Miss Griffiths, Mr. Beaumont. You have heard me speak of Miss Griffiths."

The gentleman bowed and examined her dryly from top to toe. His young wife was already talking to Mary.

"Mr. Anthony's intended," she whispered to her husband, as they passed on.

"Oh! the boarding-school miss," said he;

"plenty of color." He was a tall pale man; black-haired, and self-collected; a lawyer, but a Porticite nevertheless.

"Good evening, Mr. Cane," said Mrs. Forrest to a delicate-looking, mild man, who came by himself with a muffler round his neck. "Have you got rid of your cold yet?"

"Pretty nearly, I thank you. We are favored with such mild weather, I have got about again. It is charming—charming. There seems to be no dew either on the grass. I am glad to see you on the ground, Miss Griffiths. You will find archery a very healthy exercise."

He was a chemist, with a shop in the market-place, but was so much respected, and known withal to be so well provided for, that the petty aristocracy of the place admitted him into their ranks on most occasions. He had a wife and a large young family, but his lady, feeling herself inferior in breeding to her husband, rarely accompanied him when he went among his grander friends, and found, indeed, in her children a ready excuse for staying at home. Following Mr. Cane,

came a rather stout and somewhat pompous gentleman, Mr. Cloudesley by name; a man who cut a considerable figure in the town. He was a widower, and brought his two daughters, dashing ladies enough. Mary had seen them before, and they soon were gossiping with her.

"Oh, you must try my bow."

"And I'll lend you some arrows."

"It's very easy; and you know you are just the figure for it. You'll learn in half an hour. Do you know the very first arrow I ever shot went straight into the bull's-eye, and then I couldn't hit the target again all that evening? Do try now. Leonora, where are the arrows? What! have you hurt your arm already? Well, that's unlucky, to be sure. Leonora did just the same when she began, and she screamed so it sent me into hysterics. Do let me look at it. Why, I declare it's dreadful. Just see, Leonora; such a mark; yours wasn't half so bad."

"Dear me!" said Leonora. "How you must have screamed. I'm sure I wouldn't try again to-night."

"I don't think I could very well," said Mary; "my arm feels rather stiff; but I shall soon learn, I hope. Who is that gentleman coming across the field?"

The two girls looked and burst out laughing.

"Oh, that 's Martin Dove. See how he comes; he 'll walk right through the target."

He was a slim, pallid youth, with lanky hair, and a hat pushed back as far as possible from his forehead. He had his bow under one arm, an open book in both hands, and he walked rapidly forward across the meadow, reading, unconscious of everything besides. In a minute he reached the target, struck up against it, and overthrew it; recoiled, and looked round astonished at the groups near him, who were all laughing heartily.

"Why, Martin Dove, Martin Dove," cried Mr. Cloudesley, "do you knock our targets about in that fashion? Can nothing stop you, man? Are you a bolt from a ballista or the club of Hercules, or what other monstrous weapon of offence?"

The youth blushed a little, and replied,

"The target got here before I expected it, but I can pick it up again."

He was answered by another general laugh; but two or three of the gentlemen went to his assistance, and, no harm being done, the mishap was soon remedied. The Miss Cloudesleys chattered away about the young man and his eccentricities, and Mary learnt that he was an orphan, a bookworm, a surveyor by profession, but with very little to do, and that in their opinions he was privately smouldering away with a passion for a certain Lucy Hathorne, whom Mary knew, and to whom, as they believed, he would offer himself the very first day on which he should have the smallest prospect of being able to keep her.

"But see," cried Leonora, "here comes another of the Porchester oddities. Do you know Mr. Daniel Hobbes?"

Mary looked round and saw an elderly man, rather bent in the shoulders, short and tolerably stout, approaching. He had a large massive face and head, the features all made up of straight lines and angles, from his straight, thick eyebrows to

his square chin: his eyes were rather small and twinkling: the cheek bones, two clumsy projections under them; a long upper lip, with a good-natured smile about it, and the hair stiff and partly grey. He walked in a rather shuffling way, with quick short steps, and had his left arm in a sling. Mrs. Forrest met him and immediately asked what accident had befallen him.

"Ah, Mrs. Forrest, I am staunch, you see; staunch as ever, though an incapable to-day. Can't stir my arm out of the sling; but I got it in a good cause, ma'am, in a good cause. I was passing the new quarry yesterday, just walking round the top: saw a lad six feet below me breaking a stone with a fossil in it. I saw it with half an eye, but he didn't. In a minute he'd have smashed it. Down I jumped and caught hold of the stone. 'Bless your heart,' says I, 'don't you know what you're doing? Why, you're tearing a book older than Adam,—tearing a book older than Adam,' says I. You never saw such a face, Mrs. Forrest: he couldn't have stared more if I'd been a fossil myself."

"But how did you get your hurt, Mr. Hobbes?"

"Oh, my arm, ma'am? Caught it against the side of the quarry in jumping down. A hard rub, I can tell you; but I got the fish, ma'am, I got the fish, and a very curious specimen it was. A great fellow with a little one half down his throat. He was going to eat it, you see. Ah, the rascal! caught in the fact, and punished on the spot. Solitary confinement for the Lord knows how long, followed by public exposure and disgrace. Think of the villain's sensations when he felt himself going to his last account with the little fish half swallowed. No time to eat him; no time to let him go: judged and executed without the comfort of either satiety or penitence; a warning, madam, a warning."

"Very true, Mr. Hobbes; we must see the fossil. Will you let me introduce you to Miss Griffiths?"

"With the greatest delight, ma'am. My dear young lady, I am sorry I cannot join you to-day in this noble and ancient game, but the long bow must have a fulcrum, you see. Certainly, fire-arms have this advantage, that a pistol can

be used with one hand only, though the weapon is ineffective and the range is small."

"Miss Griffiths has lamed her arm also, so you can sympathise together."

"Lamed her arm? I am sorry to hear it, ma'am. But we must make the best of these little misfortunes; we shall represent the wounded, and lie by while the fight goes on. But where's Miss Lucy to-day? I see many fair faces, but I miss Miss Lucy's."

"She should be here. I am not aware what detains her and her brother."

"Ah!" said Mr. Hobbes, with a kind of sigh. "It's pleasant to see Miss Lucy shoot. You must go, ma'am; you must go. The battalions are forming; your arrows are wanted, I can see. I and Miss Griffiths must look on and applaud the victorious."

The evening's sport had begun, and Mrs. Forrest joined the shooters. Mary and Mr. Hobbes stood together a little behind and on one side, where a good view of the others could be had. She was amused with her companion, and glad to

be so, for at every unoccupied moment her heart beat fast with the expectation of Anthony's return and the indefinite fear that she might disappoint him. She had heard him spoken of repeatedly that evening. Many questions had been asked; many compliments paid; everybody seemed delighted to hear that he was coming home again; and when she saw these marks of interest and regard, though it increased her pride in him, it made her shrink into herself, and feel as if he could not like her best of all, where there were so many others, her superiors, she thought, in all things.

There was a large garden behind the Bank in the market-place, and from it a private footpath between two thick hawthorn hedges led to the Borough Wall meadow, entering it by a little iron gate near the ruins. Mary's eyes turned to this gate at every plausible opportunity. She knew Anthony could not pass through it till after the church clock had struck seven, but that mattered little. It seemed always to be swinging open when her face was set towards any other part of

the field. Mr. Hobbes, supposing the Roman Wall to be the object of her frequent glances, entered warmly upon a learned description of it, but I am afraid the only part of its history which he succeeded in impressing on Mary's recollection was the fact that a subterranean passage existed under it, whereby two lovers had taken flight together half a century before. In a short time Mr. Hobbes interrupted himself by exclaiming, "Oh, here comes Miss Lucy;" and immediately afterwards a young lady with a bow on her shoulder was shaking hands with him, and saying in answer to his question:

"Oh, we met Mr. Hornbeam, and my brother and he got talking about the new chimney till I began to wish they were in it. I wonder why people employ Mr. Hornbeam. I'm sure if he built me a house, I should expect the beams to fall on my head. You should hear him speak to his workmen, Miss Griffiths; his voice is enough to shake the mortar out while they are building."

"Come, Lucy, we want you. Don't stand flirt-

ing with Mr. Hobbes," cried Miss Cloudesley, from the target. Lucy blushed a little, and ran off to the shooters, dropping one of her arrows on the way. This was immediately seized upon by Mr. Martin Dove, who, getting his own bow between his legs in his over haste, fell prostrate at the young lady's feet, and narrowly escaped transfixing one of them with the point of her own weapon.

"I beg your pardon; I didn't mean to fall," said he, rising on his knees and restoring the arrow to its fair owner in that humble posture.

"A clever girl Miss Lucy; a very clever girl," said Mr. Hobbes to Mary, following Miss Hathorne with his eyes, and looking pensive as he did so. Mary had been already introduced to her, and liked her better than any one else among her new friends. She was about her own age, not quite so tall, with dark brown hair and eyes, a skin like the loveliest porcelain in its texture, less fair than Mary's, but with its pink and white unmixed except where they melted into each other. She was accounted one of the beauties of the place,

and was certainly one of the liveliest of its daughters. She lived with a brother many years older than herself, a manufacturer who occupied one of the private houses in a street leading out of the market-place.

Mr. Hobbes watched the flight of her first arrow, and clapped his available hand against the back of the disabled one, when it struck the target.

"Capital, capital! in the red, you see, Miss Griffiths. A very good shot: there she goes again; ah! Miss Lucy, that was too hasty; no, she's in again—a very clever girl."

"Hobbes," cried Mr. Forrest, raising his bow, "this makes the first dozen. There—all in—you've lost your wager."

"Not a bit, Mr. Forrest. I didn't bargain for such a day as this—an average day, sir; average wind and weather. The air is stagnant; why I'd have done it myself if that rascal of a fish had only died like a Christian instead of embalming his precious bones in a stone quarry."

"Oh, oh! Hobbes: not a word about averages. Send me the wine to-morrow, or I'll advertise you!"

"Very well; very well. I'll bring the bottle myself, and we'll drink it to the health of Mr. Anthony that is, and Mrs. Anthony that shall be."

This speech, which was received with applause, brought everybody's eyes again on Mary, and made her glad to turn to her companion, asking him some haphazard questions about the Borough Wall. He, however, was soon running forward to see the exact position of Miss Lucy's arrows. For the rest of the evening, he forgot his post as one of the disabled lookers-on, and took an active interest in the game.

The church clock had struck seven, and Mary had forgotten the archery. The little gate had not moved, however. She mechanically followed the rest as they walked backwards and forwards in the meadow. They were divided into two opposing parties, and the game had reached its climax. She heard some one say,—

"Now, Miss Hathorne, all depends upon you. Two bull's-eyes—or we are beaten."

Then she saw Lucy's arrow strike the outer circle only, followed by groans of despair on one side and a shout of victory on the other; while Lucy herself, saying,—"It's no use now; we can't win," drew her bow again at random, and the second arrow, grazing the edge of the target, glanced off sharply and disappeared among the foliage of one of the ash-trees in front of the ruin; she saw Martin Dove run towards the trees, followed by Mr. Hobbes and Lucy; but then the little gate swung open, and Mary, catching at the target-stand for a moment, found the meadow swinging also, and lost sight of all human beings except one.

Anthony had to shake hands with most of the company before he could speak to Mary, for she remained standing by the target while the others ran forward to meet him. He passed through them as hastily as he could, and stood once more face to face with her.

There was some anxiety in his looks as he

approached her, but when he took her hand it changed suddenly to satisfaction and surprise. The sun was behind her and had dazzled his eyes so that he saw her imperfectly till within a yard of her. It threw her face into shade, but lighted up stray locks of hair, gave the brilliancy of mountain snow to the edges of her white dress, and shot richer tints through the oriental colors of the scarf upon her shoulders. Her costume seemed to his fancy not less perfect than the sunset; her blushing cheeks, not warmer than the round, soft outlines of her figure: her eyes, half-frightened as they were, looked frankly into his own, and were as full of love as of timidity.

"You have come back at last," she said; as if it were not very easy to say anything.

"I have been away too long. I have been forsaking Paradise," he answered hastily, and turned again to the company, who had followed, and were close behind. But Mary was content; his smile and the tone of his voice had swept away her fears. He was not disappointed.

She watched him among his friends, and thought he was handsomer than a year ago. The warm welcome he received had naturally delighted her; she saw, too, how it gratified him; how easily he received the compliments offered to him, as if conscious that they were not unmerited; how properly he took his place at once as a chief among the rest; deciding questions as if by right; appealing to nothing else in support of his opinions; satisfied himself, and to all appearance satisfying others also. Mary saw the nobleness of this without seeing its weakness, and gloried in it—as one glories in a bright sunset cloud, though, after all, it is but vapor, crimson and gold in sunshine, but dark in shade, and not verily either an angel's wing or an island of the blest.

So much time was spent in giving Anthony welcome, and asking the shower of questions which, like manna in the wilderness, would have spoilt by keeping till the morrow, that further sport was given up for that evening, and the archers began to unstring their bows and wipe

the dew from their arrows. At the first favorable opportunity, Anthony drew Mary away from the rest.

"These people have had their full share of me," said he; "let us have a quiet walk behind the ruins while they pack up their weapons."

They passed under the ash-trees, but, instead of finding themselves alone, discovered Mr. Hobbes and Lucy standing by the ruins, and Martin Dove, just over their heads, holding on by a projecting piece of masonry, with one foot on a thick ivy branch, and the other swinging in the air. A yard or two higher still Lucy's arrow was sticking in the mortar of the wall.

"Why, Hobbes! how do you do? Miss Hathorne, I have the happiness of being at home again, and the pleasure of seeing you look well. Is there any need to introduce Miss Griffiths? I thought not. Halloa, Martin! are you making war with the owls?"

"My dear Mr. Anthony," cried Mr. Hobbes, holding out his square hand, "we were quite unconscious of your arrival. I have just been

pointing out to Miss Lucy a most interesting discovery made by myself last week; the mark of one of Oliver's shot in the old Porticus. My firm belief is, that the shot itself is embedded in the brickwork, and if it were not like cutting one's own flesh, I should get my chisel, probe the wound, and extract the missile. But, God bless you! my dear sir, you've played the truant; we must tie you up; we can't do without you; a ring and a chain, Miss Griffiths; a ring and a chain."

"Would any one take hold of my legs?" said Martin Dove, in a faint voice, overhead. "Miss Hathorne, will you be kind enough to move a little? I might hurt you, for I think I am going to fall."

"Hold fast!" said Anthony, but before he could do anything, the poor youth, who had climbed after Lucy's arrow, and had for some time been hanging on the stretch at a point from which he could neither advance nor retreat, slipped off exhausted, and came down, bruising his knees and biting his tongue, for the ivy branch chucked him under the chin in his descent, and the wall

was rough and jagged. Miss Hathorne kindly offered him an arm, as he limped and seemed in pain, and Mr. Hobbes thinking it necessary to support him also, all three walked off together, leaving Anthony and Mary to themselves.

"Come to the other side of the ruins, Mary; the tankard and cakes have come into the field, and they are all clustering round them. They won't want you yet. Let us see the prospect together."

They went round, and stood by the railings at the edge of the precipitous bank, where the river flowed below, and the wide plain spread out its fields of yellow green, and its long, evening shadows. He let go her hand; walked a yard or two away from her, and then turned to look at her with eyes full of admiration.

"I am surprised, Mary; I am delighted beyond expression; you have surpassed all my expectations, and realized all my wishes. In dress, bearing, movement, you are a perfect lady—you will do honor to my choice, and credit to my table. I am proud of you!"

Mary could not stand still to be looked at and praised after this fashion. She went timidly up to him and hid her face on his shoulder.

"I am so glad—I was afraid—I thought you might think me vulgar."

"Vulgar, Mary! I should like to see who would dare call you so."

"And my voice? Do I speak as others do?"

"You never spoke badly. There are a few faults in the tone, but not half so many as our Porchester ladies are guilty of—you need not be nervous about your voice; it contents me, and you will improve it. Now lift up your face. Let me look at you again."

"No; not now."

"Yes; immediately. The light falls exactly as it should."

"Please don't—you shall to-morrow."

"To-night as well. Bashfulness is vulgar, Mary."

She let him put her at arms' length for a moment, but longer than that, submission to his

scrutiny was impossible, so she hurried away and ran to the Borough Wall. Anthony followed, laughing.

"Take care," he cried, "that dark recess among the bushes leads to a passage underground, and there is a legend about it."

Mary stopped, and turned round.

"I know the legend," she answered, "so you had better mind how you treat me. I may meet Mr. Hobbes or Mr. Martin Dove here, and run away with them."

Her words seemed to recall unpleasant thoughts to her lover's mind. The cloud melted in the pure light shining out of her countenance; but he wished it never had been there.

"Come away from that dark hole," said he. "What have you done to your arm?"

"I tried Mrs. Forrest's bow, and found myself only a clumsy country girl."

"What! did they let you try it without a guard? How careless!"

"Mine are peasant's arms, you know. They did not expect me to be so strong."

Anthony flushed a little. "They are a lady's now, Mary; we may as well forget what they have been."

Mary looked up doubtfully at him. He was examining her bruised arm.

"My mother ought to have known better; I shall tell her so."

"No: pray, say nothing about it; you see it is nearly well."

"I see it is bruised and blackened; they ought to have taken better care of what I loved and valued. I have a right to be seriously angry."

He almost looked so, and it troubled Mary.

"They have been so kind to me," she said, "I could not bear to have them blamed. Besides, a little pain is nothing, and a bruise soon wears away." She put her hands into his, and turned towards the sunset.

"See how it glows!" she said. As Anthony looked and softened, he put his arm round her, and kissed her passionately.

"It is like my love, Mary," and they sauntered on together over the space between the ruins and

the railings. It formed a kind of grass terrace about twenty yards wide.

Presently, voices called them from the meadow. Rejoining the company, they found the Banker and his wife ready to take Mary home. Of course Anthony went with them, and the stars were out when he left his father's house, walking back alone to his own residence in the market-place.

He did not look at the stars or perceive the darkness. He passed through the garden into the road, and turned in the right direction towards the town; but it was done mechanically, for his thoughts were lost in Mary and were too entirely happy to occupy themselves with anything besides. He had been a year away, travelling much, and mixing in the gaiety of foreign cities. Perhaps the contrast between Mary's simple girlhood and the charms of fashion was in some degree the source of the extreme delight she had inspired him with. His satisfaction was certainly complete, and as the wedding-day had been fixed that evening he had nothing

more to ask for but patience during the short interval.

His dream, however, as is usually the case with dreams, was broken into by a sudden interruption. While the garden gate swang behind him, Mrs. Fraser crossed the now solitary road and stood before him on the pathway.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### SPECIAL PLEADING.

We lost sight of Mrs. Fraser a year ago, when, on the sudden news of her husband's determination to go abroad, and of the risk she ran of finding some ruinous codicil to his will if she left him to his bad associates, she abandoned for the moment her schemes against Anthony's matrimonial views, and galloped southward in a fit of terror. She found that, with the restlessness of disease, Mr. Fraser had already crossed the Channel. He had crossed the Alps when she arrived in Paris; and it was after a chase of a week or two that she caught him at last in Naples, where he had stopped to rest, worn out by his rapid journey, and, apparently, on the very eve of that final one, which, for all its

infinite and unknown stages, man begins at nightfall and must finish by the break of day. She was only just in time; not indeed to see him die, but to prevent him from leaving her a beggar. She had a certain influence over him, or at least her beauty had, and when he saw her again he refused to sign what had been prepared for him. His death seemed imminent, and Mrs. Fraser waited patiently, satisfied from what she had heard that Anthony's marriage could not take place immediately, and that she should speedily be in a position to pursue her own plans without impediment. But Mr. Fraser lingered and lingered, and it was late in the autumn before his coffin was lowered into its Italian grave, and his widow, rich and unfettered, but worn with the excitement of her own impatience and suspense, returned a free woman to England. She came back in a mood of black despair.—Her long compulsory absence and the impossibility of interfering with the natural progress of Anthony's love affairs left little room for her own hopes to expatiate on the future. She had

corresponded with Mr. Fowkes, however; and had such consolation as the knowledge that Mary was at school and Anthony abroad might give. It was not much, for her anonymous letter had, as she perceived, led to nothing. It seemed that either Anthony had paid no attention to it, or that his temper had changed, or that Mary had broken her promise and told her secret. In the latter case, a complete explanation had probably followed, and if the engagement had survived it, there was little more to be done. This, however, Mrs. Fraser did not believe. She had an irresistible confidence in Mary's truthfulness; and on this single point she was right in her estimate of her rival's character. Had she known Mary better still, or if her own temper had been a more generous one, she would have seen that the most likely way to separate the two lovers would be to take a step which did in fact occur to her, that is, to tell Mary at once that Anthony himself was the hero of her unhappy story. But the idea suggested itself only to be discarded. In Mrs. Fraser's view of the case, Mary

had so much to gain by her expected marriage that all considerations either of jealousy or generosity must be outweighed immediately.

Weary and wretched, without any practicable plan before her, but with her passionate love for Anthony increased even by the obstacles in its way, Mrs. Fraser could decide only on settling herself for a time in the neighbourhood of Porchester, to wait for his return from the Continent and for such opportunities of action as might present themselves afterwards. Lying thus in ambush for the purpose of robbing an innocent girl of her wedding-ring was not a very hallowed occupation, but, like most people in pursuit of a selfish end, Mrs. Fraser had laid before her conscience a complete justification of her own conduct. She and Anthony had been on the very eve of marriage; their attachment had been reciprocal; they were plighted to each other, and made for each other. What had happened in the last two years was a dreadful episode, but it was over, and the blame of it must be shared between them. If her love had lasted through it

all, could she believe that Anthony's was less enduring? That night in the pass, indeed, he had treated her with cruelty and scorn, but that was because she had been hurried on prematurely, and, at the moment, he no doubt saw in her conduct, not the renewal of their former confidence, but a shameless offer of love from a married woman. He would comprehend her better when she could tell him that her chains were no longer breaking only, but broken for ever. His very choice of Mary showed that his heart was still pre-occupied. How could a peasant girl content him, except on the supposition that he had relinquished the idea of finding mental sympathy again? To see him marry her was to see him exiled like herself from that paradise of congenial love at whose open gate she had so madly left him.

So eloquently Mrs. Fraser argued in defence of herself, till, as we see, she reached the happy climax of proving her own wishes to be coincident with Anthony's true happiness. So cunningly the mind asserts its logic to confound its instincts

when the one bends more complacently than the other before the nod of its desires.

Two or three miles from Porchester, on the western side, was a hilly district of considerable extent. The hills, without being lofty, were just high enough to give the features of mountain scenery on a reduced scale. Being chiefly composed of slate, they abounded with sharp peaks and jagged ridges. They were full of narrow gorges and picturesque hollows, and could boast of several brooks, tributary to the neighbouring river, and of not a few waterfalls among the rocks. Part of this district, which had the general name of Chosen Forest (nobody could tell, even in Porchester, how it had acquired the name), was well cultivated and sprinkled over with farmhouses and the seats of county people; another portion, enclosed, but hardly cultivated, was held chiefly for its mineral treasures, and the remainder still belonged to no one in particular, and was a wild nursery for game. Certain anomalies in the geological structure of these hills made them especially dear to the scientific souls of the county,

and added even to the pleasure of the unlearned by giving great variety both to the forms and the foliage for which Chosen Forest was remarkable.

In one of the hollows among these hills a Roman Catholic gentleman, seeking seclusion, built a red brick house in Queen Elizabeth's reign. Two centuries later his descendant planted the hollow and the hill-sides above it with larches, and, dying with a flaw in his will, left the property to the tender mercies of a Chancery suit. The suit halted for want of funds, but the larches kept growing, and in a generation or two the timber had become so valuable that proceedings were renewed. Nothing had come of them, however, except that certain trees were cut down annually to pay expenses, and that the house was let for a trifle to any one who chose to take it. It happened to be empty when Mrs. Fraser returned to England, and it seemed to suit her purpose. She took a fancy to it, and became the tenant. The house was about three miles from Porchester market-place. The road to it was good but unfrequented, the retirement was com-

plete, and the place having been occupied by several tenants in succession, who had proved to be uninteresting people and had stayed in it only for short periods, the neighbours had ceased to be inquisitive as to its inhabitants. Mrs. Fraser put a farming man and his wife into it; made it understood that she came there for the benefit of her health, and endeavoured, by wandering in the larch woods and on the hills, by rambles about Porchester, and by secret inquiries concerning the movements of Mary and her friends, to while away the long months until Anthony's return. He came—she knew the hour of his arrival, and was resolved to lose no time.

She had made a curious discovery connected with the Borough Wall, and by means of it she became an unobserved observer of the archery meeting and of the little scene behind the ruin. In granting herself this indulgence, Mrs. Fraser, as usual, was not wise. The sight of Anthony, Mary's beauty, and his evident admiration, turned her brain and upset her judgment at the moment when, if her designs were to be successful, the

most artful policy was required. She did indeed prevent herself from breaking in upon the lovers' meeting, but she followed them to the Banker's house, paced up and down the road with her thoughts in complete disorder the whole of the evening, and when at length Anthony came, as she expected, alone from the garden gate, she approached him with all her passions uppermost, and with little chance therefore of furthering her own purpose.

There was barely light enough for recognition, but there was no mistaking Mrs. Fraser's voice, as she touched Anthony's arm and stopped him.

"What!" he exclaimed, turning angrily, "are you still insane, Mrs. Fraser? Have you no more self-respect than you had a year ago?"

"Are you still infatuated, Anthony? Has not a year been long enough to cure your passion for this girl?"

"A year has been long enough to justify my choice, and to make it irrevocable. A year has brought me to within a few weeks of my wedding-day, Mrs. Fraser, and has made your society

anything but desirable. Let me pass on, if you please."

"Not now, Anthony; not now," she replied, her hurried breathing showing her inward agitation. "I have a right to keep you. I have a claim upon you. That wretched girl has never had a claim like mine."

"Mrs. Fraser, will you have the decency to keep these feelings to yourself? Such speeches from a married woman ——"

"Hush!" she cried, "I am not a married woman. I am as free as a child born yesterday. The man I married and hated, died six months ago. Have I no right to speak now to the only man I ever loved?"

"If that is the case," he answered, "you are less unhappy than you deserved to be. Be grateful for your release, and, if you can, make a better use of your liberty than you did before."

"Is this cold cruelty all you feel towards me, Anthony? Or are you waiting for me to speak more plainly? I have no reason for modesty. We have been betrothed lovers; we have told

our feelings a hundred times to one another. Do you not feel? can you not understand? must I tell you in actual words that it was madness only that divided us? Must I ask you audibly to give me your heart again?"

"You are too late, Mrs. Fraser; and what you are saying can only bring confusion upon yourself. To know that you entertain these feelings is doubtless painful to me, but they can have no influence on my conduct, and you might have spared me this additional injury."

"Anthony, Anthony, do you forget so soon?"

"No, Catherine, I forget nothing; not even my duty and my plighted word; matters which have little hold upon some memories."

It was the first time he had called her by her Christian name, and she felt his sarcasm all the more bitterly.

"Go, then," she cried, in a fit of frenzy; "take the peasant girl, marry her, and blush for her. Let her curse you; let her be false to you. When you send her back to her mountains, it will be time enough to think of me."

She threw away his arm, and walked rapidly from him. "Fool, fool!" she muttered to herself, when, after walking half a mile in little more than five minutes, she stopped suddenly for breath; "to think of meeting him again by night; in darkness even. I might have conquered him by daylight, and I have thrown my best weapon away."

She was probably mistaken; but Anthony was still standing where she left him, with a flush on his cheeks, which the night concealed, but which was not simply a flush of anger. We cannot annihilate the past. Our best or our worst efforts can only lay it in ruins; and sometimes, stumbling on a broken column, we are tempted suddenly to build again what we have most studiously destroyed. To think of Mrs. Fraser, not as he had hitherto thought of her, as the wife of his rival, but as the woman whom he still might love and marry if he pleased, was, even in Anthony's present frame of mind, to receive for the moment one of these sudden impulses. It only lasted, however, till Mary's

image as he had left her, had time to wind its timid arms about him. He pushed the broken column out of sight, and went home to Porchester.

Almost at the same moment a chamber window in the Banker's villa was opened slowly and silently, and Mary leaned out bare-headed into the placid night. She did not look at the earth or the shadowy trees; her eyes were on the lighted firmament, and her thoughts soon followed. "I am so happy; he loves me so," she said at first. Then her head drooped on her folded hands, and a whisper came out into the air: "Make me worthy; make me worthy."

She looked again into the sky. The Great Bear hung before her, and her father's favorite star. She spread her arms as if something in the air were near her.

"Father, father, I am still your child; I shall never be any other." Some stray lamb bleated in the dark fields near at hand. She smiled then, and listened, but it did not bleat again, and the smile passed into thoughtfulness as the scenes of her mountain life floated by her through the

starlight. Mary drew back her head and closed her window. A few footfalls on the floor; the rustle of light garments in the room; and then there was only a warm face lying with closed eyelids and pouting lips; and over it, a vision of angels.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### ANTHONY AT HOME.

The present generation already nearly forgets what was meant by an English Municipal Corporation, before the year of grace 1835. In our days these worthy bodies are the general guardians of our principal towns, represent pretty fairly the wishes of their inhabitants, do most of the public work that is done within their jurisdiction, and are on the whole as honest and disinterested in their doings as the major part of their constituents. The Mayor of a Borough is a respectable man, the Town Clerk a reputable lawyer, the Common Councillors are fair samples of the British burgess elect, and the proceedings of all of them matters of public notoriety. The

public property is not generally embezzled, the public officers are not always political partizans, the local charities are not dispensed chiefly to the dispensers, nor do the members of the Council Chamber sit down principally to dine. These be great changes. Middle-aged men remember the things that were changed, but, like the pains and nausea of a disease long past and cured, they no longer find any place in the current thoughts of Englishmen. In those days the principle of self-government in our borough towns had very nearly disappeared. The corporate bodies were in general self-elected and irresponsible; out of some two hundred municipal corporations, not more than about a dozen had escaped this process of decay. In these, however, the free burgesses did, as of old, possess and exercise their power of choosing their local governors, and Porchester was one of them. Not that even here the constituency was a large one, for the burgess rights belonged exclusively to the freemen of the town, and its freedom could only be obtained by birth, purchase, or apprenticeship, or by marriage with a freeman's

daughter. It belonged in fact to a small minority of the inhabitants, who annually renewed by their vote one half of their Common Council, the elections taking place at the end of October, and the contest being at times severe. Never had they been more severe than in those years in which the struggle between the Porcites and the Porticites, that is, between the advocates and opponents of the new bridge, waxed strong. The debate had often died out for a time, but the smouldering ashes never failed to break again into flame after a season of quietude; for the Porticites had always succeeded in having a majority in the Council Chamber, the new bridge had not been built, the dangers of the old one remained unabated, and reasons for renewing the strife could never fail while matters were in this condition. The Corporation possessed already certain powers for effecting local improvements; the land, moreover, through which the new street would pass was chiefly in their hands; there remained, however, the Borough Wall meadow, and Mr. Forrest's resolution not to part with it,

so that the particular question in dispute had come to be whether an Act of Parliament should be applied for, to compel the Banker to sell his land to the town. So matters stood when Anthony took Mary Griffiths from the altar to be mistress of his married home in the market-place.

Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Forrest sat together at their tea-table on a September evening. The wedding and the honeymoon were over. Gossip, like the chirping of birds, had risen and subsided. A few intimate friends knew the circumstances of Anthony's courtship, but the current idea was that Mary was a poor girl whom his parents had educated, and that he himself fell in love with her while she was at school. From her own parents her separation was for the time absolute. They were not even present at her wedding, though Mrs. Griffiths had intended to be, and had pleased herself with the notion that her good breeding would be recognised among the grandees of Porchester. But John Griffiths dissuaded her from the experiment.

"Our Mary is taken from us," he said; "it's no use hiding it. She's going to another country and a life that's not ours. We must give her up; the Lord bless her; we must part with her, and not think to follow her. She'll come to us by times; I know she'll come; and it's best and fittest for her. You and I should be out of place where Mary's going; we should only maze her and trouble her; but be she the finest lady in the land, she'll never be out of place herself when she comes to her father's cottage."

So Mary left them once more in the mountain valley, when the fortnight given to her parting visit was ended, and went back to Porchester under Mrs. Forrest's protection, with streaming eyes and many sobs, but with the light of her pure love for Anthony making rainbows in the storm and clearing it at last away.

They were married. Their house, over the Bank, was large and comfortable, though old-fashioned and in the midst of the town. Not so very much in the midst of it, however, for the thickest part of the population lay on the other

side of the market-place. There was a good walled garden behind the Bank, and over it an uninterrupted view as far as the Borough Wall meadow, which was about a quarter of a mile distant, and connected, as I have said, by a narrow private path with Mr. Forrest's garden. The garden consisted of a grass plat in the middle, a gravel walk round it, and a deep border, edged with box, at the foot of the wall. The grass plat had some beds in it, and was large enough besides to be used as a bowling-green, and had an old apple-tree at one corner. The veteran branches, though darkened by the smoke and soot with whose growing hosts they had fought from year to year, still burst out into blossom every spring, raised every summer the green banner of life among their enemies, and ripened in the autumnal sunshine a crop of pippins, streaked with blood-red lines, like trophies from the battle.

The best rooms in the house overlooked the garden, and were removed therefore from the noise of the market-place. Mary and her

husband took tea in one of these which was called the library, because of its book-shelves, but was furnished in other respects more tastefully than any other apartment in the house. It was hung with blue and gold; had a white marble mantel-piece supported by caryatides, and ornamented with a time-piece representing a Roman temple, two tall alabaster vases, a pair of lustres, and a large mirror behind. The fender and fire-irons were polished steel; the carpet rich and warm; and the furniture modern, comfortable, and abundant.

The town was partly lighted with gas, but it had not entered the houses, and four wax candles in the room showed in those days that Mr. Anthony Forrest did not stint his wife in her housekeeping.

The weather being cold, a bright fire was burning. The tea-table was a round one. Anthony, sitting by it at one side of the fire-place, had been eating his toast in silence for some minutes. Mary sat before the tray, opposite to him, and had fallen into a pleasant reverie.

"My love," said he, "a man's life should be an active one."

"Yes, dear; I suppose it should."

"The Bank parlor is not my proper place among my fellow-creatures. I am wasting my powers in it."

"It looks like a very dull place. I wish you would let me take the carpet up, and have the walls painted."

"I am certain I might do great good, Mary. I am not half occupied except on market-days. The old gentleman sticks to his post and manages to be all day doing his business, but I could finish his work and my own in half the time. Of course one of us must be at hand through banking hours, but I have a great deal of spare time notwithstanding."

"Do you think, dear, of trying something else besides the Bank?"

"Yes; I shall enter into politics."

"What! shall you be a member of Parliament?" said Mary, in some alarm.

"No," he replied; "Parliament is not the thing

for me. It's better to lead others than to be one in a crowd. I'd rather be the head of a borough than the tool of a Ministry."

"I am sure you are clever enough to be the head of anything, if you tried. Who is the head of the borough now?"

"The borough, Mary, is just a flock of geese, and has no head whatever. The nearest approach to it is that fellow Hornbeam. He shouts the loudest, and the geese run a little when he does so."

"I don't think your voice is as loud as Mr. Hornbeam's," said his wife, laughing. "How will you get the flock to go?"

"Drive them. They may be driven if one has energy enough. The fact is, Mary, the affairs of Porchester are in a pitiable state. The constituency is corrupt. The Town Councillors are nearly all low fellows. His worship the Mayor opened a public meeting yesterday with some remarks about the 'hobjects' of the assembly. The local revenues are wasted; the charities are robbed; and instead of doing their best to

improve the town, our precious Corporation go on amusing the good folk with the confounded old scheme about the Bridge Hill; their wisdoms, luckily, being divided on that question hitherto. It is a national disgrace, and will remain so till some one with the needful qualifications puts his soul into the work and becomes the renovator of Porchester."

He got up during this harangue, and began to walk about the room.

"Mary, I feel that I could do it. I could defeat these ignorant curs and that loud speaking-trumpet, Hornbeam. I could beautify my native town; clear out its filth, mental and physical; make its poor, happier, its rich, humbler; raise the tone of its public life; put down its vices; shame away its selfishness and corruption; make myself the head of a restored community, helping and obeying me. You would share my pre-eminence; you would increase it by your own superiority among your own sex. It would be a noble work, Mary."

Mary thought a little before she answered.

"Yes, dearest; I think it would be a noble work, though I would rather do all the good without being pre-eminent, as you say."

"Impossible, Mary; and quite wrong if it were possible. Those who are fit to lead are bound to do it, and great benefits deserve great rewards. I have a serious purpose and an upright intention. I shall use my power for worthy ends, not for pettifogging or dishonest ones; not like those who pretend at present to watch over the interests of the town, and really watch over nothing but their own stomachs and the pockets beside them."

He had taken his seat again. Mary went and knelt on the rug by him.

"I am sure of that, dearest; I know you are noble and generous in all you do."

"I try to be so, Mary. Like most young men I have wasted a great deal of time, but I shall make amends for it now. I shall not rest till Porchester is a city set on a hill, in more senses than one. I shall work hard, Mary, and it shall be your privilege to help me."

"I will indeed. It will be a happy life for us to be doing good together. Those poor women whose husbands neglect them and use them badly, we shall have them better cared for, shall we not? And the poor little children growing up in wickedness, we may save them for better lives."

"Yes, my love; those will be among the minor consequences of the change I mean to effect. The first thing is to establish better principles of management, that is, to get a totally different set of men at the head of our affairs. This will be the great struggle. When that is gained, improvements will follow as a matter of course."

"I have sometimes wondered," Mary said, "whether it was quite right to oppose the Bridge Hill alteration. The street seems very dangerous. A child was killed there the other day."

"My dear Mary, never let me hear you express a doubt on that subject. The scheme is got up by builders and inn-keepers for merely mercenary ends. The street is certainly an awkward one,

but any one with common sense can pass along it as safely as I can in my own garden. Their plan to compel my father to sell his land would be a gross violation of private rights, and the destruction of the old Borough Wall would be a perfect crime. Into the bargain the carrying out of the scheme would give a signal triumph to the worst party in the town and throw us back for half a century. Shut your ears to any arguments to the contrary; they are not to be listened to for a moment."

Mary laughed, and promised to shut her ears. She had perfect confidence in her husband's judgment; and indeed, in this case, her feelings were all on his side, except in so far as the death of the little child, who had as usual been run over on the Bridge Hill, made her wish to get rid of the cause of danger. Anthony continued talking about the steps he had in view for the regeneration of the Borough; and told her he intended to ask three or four friends to dine with him next day, staunch Porticites and influential citizens, whose help he wished

to engage in the contest with the reigning powers.

Mary entered with more and more ardor into his plans, and began to imagine his success with the pride of a young wife thinking of her husband's glory.

## CHAPTER XV.

### PRIVY CONSPIRACY.

Early next morning Anthony was walking by himself on the road leading to the Four All's. He was not one to let a new-born resolution die in the cradle. Having made up his mind to become the head of the Borough, he at once threw all his energies into the work before him, and began that course of single-eyed determination which is usually the golden road to political success. A rumor had reached him concerning the plans of Mr. Hornbeam and his party, and his object was, if possible, to learn what they were doing before he unfolded his own design to his friends. At some distance from the inn he met the landlord, Mr. Fowkes, walking with Mr. Hornbeam himself in the direction of the town. Anthony gave them

a salutation, and passed on smiling. "The landlord is out," thought he. "All the better. His wife must be left at home." He found the inn door open, and entered. There seemed to be nobody there. He walked up to the bar and tapped on the counter. A voice, somewhere at the top of the stairs, made immediate answer:

"Who's tapping there? You must wait."

"I should like to have a word with you, Mrs. Fowkes," said Anthony, who knew her voice.

"Who are you? What do you want? You may go away and come again. Fowkes is out, and the girl's ill a-bed. My gown's off; and I wish I may die if I come down like this."

"I can wait a few minutes, Mrs. Fowkes, if you will be kind enough to put on your gown."

"What do you want then? Why can't you speak? Are you one of the gentlemen, I wonder?"

"You had a meeting of them here last night, had n't you?" said Anthony.

"Yes, to be sure there was, and last Wednesday, and the Wednesday before; and I wish

they were further with their meetings for all the good they do."

"Can you tell me, Mrs. Fowkes, whether Mr. Hathorne was with them yesterday?"

"Yes, I can, but I shan't; so you needn't ask any questions. I wish I may die if I speak another word."

"Ah! he came with Mr. Hornbeam, and went away with him, no doubt."

"Yes, he did; and what do you ask me for if you know? Just take yourself away, and shut the door after you."

"Why, Mrs. Fowkes, when the new road is made you'll have your house too full to shut the door."

"Hold your tongue about the new road. There'll never be a new road for all their talk; and if they get their new men in they'll just be like the old ones. It's the very ruin of Fowkes; he'll think of nothing else, the fool. It's all a cheat, and I wish——"

"Good morning, Mrs. Fowkes," said Anthony, and he walked, with a look of satisfaction, out of

the house. He had learned all he wanted, and hearing indications of the gown's adjustment and preliminary movements as if the wearer were about to descend, he thought a closer interview might as well be avoided.

In the course of the day Anthony had a conversation with his father. The old gentleman was not at all inclined to put his own grey head into the jaws of local politics, and gravely warned his son of the danger, not only to life and limb, but to peace and comfort, involved in the experiment. He made no opposition, however, and even promised a tacit support. Having settled that matter, Anthony went home to dine with his friends. He had chosen four whom for various reasons he thought would be most serviceable and trustworthy. They were Mr. Cloudesley, the retired gentleman; Mr. Beaumont, the lawyer; Mr. Cave, the druggist; and Mr. Daniel Hobbes.

As soon as Mary had left the dinner-table, her husband opened up his plan.

"My friends," said he, "I believe we are all true Porticites."

"To the backbone," said Mr. Beaumont.

"To the marrow," said Mr. Cloudesley.

"To death and glory," said Mr. Daniel Hobbes.

"Most certainly," said modest Mr. Cave, the druggist.

"It has pleased Heaven," continued Anthony, "to make us burgesses of Porchester, and we owe a duty to the town which I think we have hitherto neglected."

"Then, my dear sir, let us go and do it," said Mr. Hobbes. "Repentance and reformation are among the chief privileges of the human species —repentance and reformation."

"Exactly what I am going to propose," said Anthony. "The state of Porchester as a civil community is disgraceful; I need not describe what you all know so well; I wish rather to dwell on our own shortcomings in this matter. We stand quietly by while everything is corrupted; the town has large funds, and we see them wasted; great opportunities, and we let them go unimproved. We are bringing up a new generation

in dirt, pestilence, ignorance and vice, and we suffer our local institutions to foster and aggravate everything that is bad amongst us, instead of making them the remedy. This is scandalous; it ought not to be; I have got you together here that we may resolve it shall not be."

"Capital!" cried Hobbes. "The best resolution that has been made since Mrs. Anthony Forrest gave her consent. Ah, my dear friends, wisdom comes with marriage like mirth with wine. Let us drink to Porchester restored."

"To Porchester restored," said the others, emptying their glasses, for Mr. Daniel Hobbes had a pleasant way about him which made his enthusiasm generally contagious, though often enough it was premature.

"But now as to means," said the lawyer. "We have passed our abstract resolution; what measure can we found upon it?"

"There is the difficulty," said Mr. Cloudesley. "What can we do?"

"It would be very acceptable if Parliament were to inquire into these things," Mr. Cave

observed; "our corporate towns are really in sad want of some measure of reform."

"We may have to wait long," replied Anthony, "before Parliament interferes, and in the meantime there are speedier means at our disposal. The evils we have to get rid of spring from a single source, and admit of a single remedy. The management of the town is in bad hands: this is the root of all the mischief. We must change its managers. Let five gentlemen of high principle and united resolution be introduced into the Town Council, and they would be strong enough to carry all before them, and to change everything."

"Five gentlemen of high principle," repeated Daniel Hobbes. "Why, here we are! We've nothing to do but to offer ourselves at the next election, and, ahem! get ourselves elected."

"Which is another matter," suggested the lawyer, with a smile.

"Mr. Hobbes has understood my meaning," said Anthony, "and you, Mr. Beaumont, have correctly estimated the difficulty we shall have to overcome.

But we are not to shrink from a difficulty, and on careful consideration I believe it will turn out a less serious one than might be supposed. You see, gentlemen, the case stands thus—the higher classes in the town have for many years withdrawn themselves from any share in its local management. The work is looked upon as a bore, and the party squabbles involved in it as unbearable. In default of better men, a set of ignorant fellows have been chosen, and now rule over us. Hence the corruption of the whole. Now my persuasion is, that if a number of respectable individuals, such as ourselves, came forward as candidates, they would receive very extensive support. No doubt we should have opposition also, but that must be overcome."

"The High-street tradesmen turn the scale," said Mr. Beaumont. "Do you think we should have their votes? You might, with the Bank ledger to back you; but they are a terrible set of fellows, as jealous as King Pharaoh, and afflicted with a most unwholesome dread of lawyers in general."

"Scalded dogs, Beaumont," said Mr. Cloudesley. "You drew their leases."

"Not I; I wish I had. They're such precious long ones. I don't think a lease has run out these ten years."

"I know they turn the scale," said Anthony, "and I think we can manage them. The new road agitation has been quiet for the last two years, and the scheme is supposed to be abandoned. Now, I have ascertained that Mr. Hornbeam and his party have entered into a conspiracy to do by stealth what they have failed to do openly; they intend at the next election, which takes place in six weeks, to turn out some three or four Porticites from the Council, introduce as many thorough-going Porcites, and immediately afterwards raise again the question of the road. Their measures are being taken in private, and the thing is to be done in such a way as to occasion no suspicion. Mr. Hathorne, I am sorry to say, has joined them, though it is not generally known. He employs a number of freemen in his factory, and makes their party very strong. Now, I think

we may turn their weapons against them, and defeat them with them. My plan is to be beforehand with Mr. Hornbeam; to get one of our own party in the Council to feign a change of sentiment, and propose a reconsideration of the new road plans before the elections come on. All High-street will be in arms immediately. We come forward then, and offer ourselves as candidates in support of the old road. We shall have the votes of every one of them, and win the election."

There was a short silence; the glasses were emptied, and then most of the confederates put their hands in their pockets, and stretched out their legs for reflection.

"It looks feasible," said the lawyer.

"Gentlemen, I pronounce it a noble scheme, nobly planned, and leading to the most astonishing results," said Daniel Hobbes.

"A truly English proposition. I cordially give in my adhesion," was Mr. Cloudesley's remark.

"I approve entirely; yes, it certainly should

be done, in justice to our fellow-creatures," said the druggist.

"My friends," said Anthony, "you respond as I expected. We have a task before us worthy of our best energies. Our reward will be a proud one. We shall become, I doubt not, the ruling spirits of our native town."

"To the confusion of the Porcite heresy; to the glory of the old Roman Temple; to the immortal safety of the Borough Wall," cried Hobbes.

"To arms!" exclaimed Mr. Cloudesley; "where shall we strike first, General? What's to be the order of battle? You see the war-horses scent the combat, and snort defiance."

"I glory in your enthusiasm," Anthony replied. "I propose as a first step that we form ourselves into a society or committee, and pledge mutual faith and perseverance."

All gave the pledge with acclamation.

"Baptize us, name us, give us a corporate title," exclaimed Mr. Cloudesley. "Suppose we call ourselves the Council of Five."

"The Reform Committee," suggested the lawyer.

"The Borough Wall Club," cried Daniel Hobbes; and his suggestion was immediately declared most suitable, and at once adopted, Anthony being voted the permanent chairman, and Beaumont undertaking the secretarial duties.

"Now," said the new secretary, after a few rules had been drawn up and agreed to, "everything depends at first upon secrecy. I propose, therefore, that for the present, we pledge ourselves dutifully to say nothing to our wives."

"Oh, ho! oh, ho!" cried Mr. Hobbes. "Law versus gallantry; prudence against conjugal bliss. Leave the cause to me; you four are interested parties; leave the cause to me."

"Our secretary forgets," said Anthony, "that if we are married men, we are not foolish husbands. Our wives, I hope, are in such due subjection to us, and have learned from us so far to respect the confidence we repose in them, that no secret of ours, which we think it wise

to trust them with, is in danger of being exposed by their indiscretion. If any one of us should feel otherwise, he will of course act accordingly. I myself should consider my whole character and authority as a husband called in question by a pledge which involves the idea that my wife could be so far forgetful of her duty."

The married men colored and laughed, and declared the cause well disposed of, and the proposition fell to the ground. Then Anthony entered earnestly into the details of his plans; explained that his father, though indisposed to take any active part in politics, would give them his interest and countenance; produced various statistics which he had been preparing, and finally had his health drunk heartily as the renovator of Porchester. The club adjourned in high spirits to the library, where Mary made tea for them; and, politics being dismissed, an evening of lively conversation followed. Anthony was in the highest spirits, and his friends were not less disposed to enjoy themselves.

Something being said about some quarries in

which Mr. Cloudesley had an interest, Daniel Hobbes soon found an opening for a discourse on fossils, one of his favorite subjects.

"Talking of fossils," said he, "a very singular circumstance happened the other day; a very singular circumstance. I knocked off a new specimen in the dusk, and took him home. Found next morning I had got him all except his tail, so I went off to the quarry to get it. Not a trace of it to be found; but while I was looking about to be sure there was no mistake as to the place, who should I see but old Jones, my father's clerk that was, poking about the quarry. Hadn't seen him for twenty years. He always had an eye for fossils, and a notion that human bones would some day turn up among them, to confound all misbelievers about the Flood and the Book of Genesis. I've known him out days and days, looking for an antediluvian rib. He left the town when my father died, and has been keeper of a museum in the north ever since.

"'Why, Jones!' said I, seeing him poking

among the rocks. 'Why, Mr. Daniel!' says he. We knew each other directly. 'So you haven't done looking for Noah's grandfather,' says I. 'No,' says he; 'but he hides very close.' "I should think he did! Ha, ha! I should think he did!" and Mr. Hobbes laughed heartily, joined by all the rest.

"However," he continued, "that's not what I was going to say. I and Jones fell talking, and we got on the old Porticus question, and had good fun of it. Now, you know, my father was Town Clerk of Porchester for thirty years, and Jones was articled to him and stayed with him till he died. Ah! Mr. Forrest, those were grand days; we've all been under the clouds since then; but it's breaking, it's breaking! well, not to talk politics before ladies," (here Mr. Hobbes winked at Mr. Beaumont, and Mr. Beaumont smiled with closed lips at Mr. Cloudesley, who nudged Mr. Cave with his elbow, and glanced at Mary,) "not to talk politics before ladies, I was saying to old Jones what a world I'd give for some great discovery that would shut the mouths

of the Porcite heretics past opening again. Says he; gentlemen, pray, observe; 'I remember,' says he, 'when I was a boy, once seeing in the Town Clerk's office an old parchment deed with the name of the Borough in it, and spelt, not Porchester, but Porti-ceaster.' 'Jones,' cried I, 'that's worth more than the skeletons of Gog and Magog.' Only think, my friends, of the circumstance. Why, the question is settled by it. If the town was ever known as Porti-ceaster, the derivation from Porticus, the absurdity of Porcus, is mathematically clear. The misfortune is, old Jones can't for the life of him recollect what the document was, or what box it was kept in, 'but,' says he, 'it was in the Town Clerk's office then, and is in it now, I'll be sworn.'"

"Very curious, indeed," said Mr. Cave.

"Couldn't a search be made?" said Mr. Cloudesley.

"I went next day to the present Town Clerk," Hobbes answered; "but he's as hard as a fossil himself to do anything with. If I could only get authority, I'd search the office till I found

the document, please God to spare me long enough."

"Well, Hobbes, the time may come," said Mr. Beaumont. "When I am Town Clerk, you shall search till you're tired."

The party broke up soon afterwards, and Anthony, left alone with Mary, related to her the substance of what had passed in the dining-room, the success of his first plans, the formation of the Borough Wall Club, the steps about to be taken by it, and the near prospect of political power which had opened before him. Mary listened with delight, and in her pure admiration and unbounded sympathy, Anthony tasted the first sweets that fall upon the way to fame. His young wife, indeed, took exception to one part of the scheme. "Is it quite right," she asked, "to get one of your party in the Town Council to pretend he has changed his opinion about the new road, when he has not really done so? Of course, I don't understand much about it, but it looks like deceiving."

"My love," he replied, "women are no judges

of these matters, and many things are necessary in politics which none of us would approve of in private life."

Mary supposed it must be so, as he said it was.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### REBELLION.

Now Mary was very young, and altogether inexperienced in the ways of the world. The windings of her native streams had taught her nothing of political intrigue; the rocks never chid her when she broke their silence, nor the mountain flowers when she carried them from lonely places to set them in a playmate's bosom. Her husband, with his natural energy, scarcely able to sleep while his plans were unaccomplished, was up and at work before Mary was well awake next morning. They had no further conversation, therefore; and Anthony, carried away by his own enthusiasm, had forgotten to say anything to her on the necessity of secrecy. A little thought might perhaps have shown her that it was best

to be quiet, but Mary's heart was full of her husband's future fame and power, and was yearning to well over and share its sweet waters with a sister soul; so after breakfast, a solitary and hasty one, she went across to her friend Lucy Hathorne, and told her the greater part of what she knew. Lucy sympathised with her to her heart's content.

"Dear Mrs. Forrest," she said, "I never knew anybody like you; you have all sorts of happiness—such a husband to begin with, and then such prospects to think about. If ever I get married, the first thing I shall care about is to be proud of my husband. Oh, I should so like to hear people praising him, and see him up above all the rest. But you deserve it all! I wish I deserved it as well as you do, but sometimes I think I must be half-crazed, I do such silly things. I spoilt my new bonnet last Tuesday with only setting it down in a hurry by an open window where the rain came in. It was done for in ten minutes; all the colors ran, and you never saw such a mess. Indeed, this week is full of misfortunes for me. Do you know I lost

my poor little dog yesterday? Poor little thing! it was run over in the High Street. You never knew such a sensible dog! It was a dog I would not have parted with for anything, and the poor creature was brought home almost smashed: oh! such a sight! I was so glad to see you this morning, to put me in good spirits; for, do you know, ever since the little dog was brought home, I've felt as if something was going to happen."

"Well, something is going to happen, you see," said Mary, "but not at all a misfortune. I suppose your brother is on my husband's side?"

"Upon my word, I can't tell you; Richard is so reserved in some things. He never talks about politics, but I do believe he has had something to do with them lately, for he's been out so often in the evening with Mr. Hornbeam, and I'm sure it isn't all about the new chimney he's building."

"Why, Mr. Hornbeam is the chief man on the other side, Lucy."

"Is he? Really, my dear, you see how much

I know. But I'll ask Richard right out. I don't think he can be on the wrong side, and if he is, you and I must convert him. Nobody has cared about the town matters, you know, except the low sort of people; but, of course, everybody will think about them now Mr. Forrest is taking them up. Do come, dear, and see my poor little dog's grave in the garden. I gave him an old pocket-handkerchief for a winding-sheet, and buried him like a Christian."

Mary spent the morning with her merry companion. In the afternoon she was busy with household matters. Anthony was so much engaged, that instead of coming to dinner he had a sandwich in the Bank parlor, and it was late in the evening before Mary saw him again. She had got the tea-tray ready, and a hot dish of meat, to make up for the partial fast she thought he had been enduring. He came in rubbing his hands, and with his eyes sparkling. He had done a good day's work, and everything was satisfactory.

"We shall triumph, Mary," he said, kissing

her, and sitting down with a good appetite. "Hornbeam's power is at an end."

He detailed the progress he had made during the day, and having finished his meal, drew an easy chair beside his wife, and stretched himself out in it complacently.

"I talk to you of these things, my love," said he; "I wish you to understand them and enter into them with me. I need hardly say that my confidence must be met with the strictest secrecy on your part. Nothing on this subject must be repeated to your friends."

Poor Mary turned pale at these terrible words. Her morning's conversation with Lucy stared her in the face upon the instant. What had she been doing!

"Oh, dear!" she said, her pallor changing to blushes, "I am so sorry; I never thought of it. I told Lucy Hathorne this morning what you were going to do!"

Anthony sprang to his feet as if electrified, the blood flying to his forehead, and astonishment in his face.

"Thoughtless girl!" he cried; "is it possible you know what you are saying? Tell my secrets —your husband's secrets—to Lucy Hathorne! Why, Mary, it's ruin, destruction, failure, and disgrace! Good heavens! Richard Hathorne has made himself Hornbeam's absolute tool; a member of his secret committee! and my wife —my wife—Mrs. Anthony Forrest—tells my plans to his sister!"

He struck his hand on the mantel-piece, and stood looking at her as if doubtful of his own senses. Poor Mary had never heard a really unkind word from him before; had never offended him, never crossed his purposes till now; had nowhere in her trusting and loving heart a dream of what might be a husband's anger. She got up from her chair, very still; crept to her husband's side, and took his hand.

"Dear Anthony, I am so sorry. Have I done so very wrong?"

"Wrong! Wrong, Mrs. Forrest! You have done unpardonably wrong. Where was your respect, where your obedience, where was every

quality that befits a wife, when you betrayed a confidence which it was an honor to receive, and a sacred duty to preserve?"

"Dear love," she said, "you did not tell me."

"What! do you try to shift the blame upon me, whom you have so offended, so injured, so humbled? I had the folly, the absurdity, to pledge my word for your trustworthiness. Henceforth I am a branded man; my plans destroyed, my hopes frustrated, my name a laughing stock. Heaven! to think it possible!"

"Dearest ——" Mary tried to speak again, but her voice gave way, her knees shook under her, and she sank down sobbing at his feet. He seemed not to notice her. She had let go his hand, and he walked up and down on the rug with repeated exclamations. Mary started to her feet, and again clung to him.

"Let me go to Lucy, directly; she may not have seen her brother. She may not have told him."

"Fruitless folly," he cried. "Hathorne went home hours ago. I saw him enter the house.

Lucy's a sieve—that is, she's a woman. He knows the whole of my plans, and is laughing at me for my wife and my pains."

The first heat of his anger had passed, and looking down at his wife's face, he was struck with her appearance. He put her in a chair.

"Sit down, Mary. Are you ill?"

"I am wretched," she said, clinging to him. "Dear love, I am young and ignorant; forgive me!"

Anthony thought she was on the point of fainting, and, already half-ashamed of his own violence, he turned hastily to get some water from the table. This little act of kindness was a better restorative. Mary burst into fresh tears, and threw herself into his arms. When she was a little more composed, he said, gravely—

"Mary, you have been guilty of a great error. I will not say you have destroyed, but you have shaken your husband's confidence in you: hereafter I can never trust you without fear. The injury you have done me cannot now be estimated. To-morrow I shall know the worst, and shall try

to overcome it. Dry your eyes, and remember the lesson of this evening."

They were sitting in one of the front rooms looking upon the market-place, and while Anthony spoke, a hubbub was heard outside. Glancing at the windows, he saw bright flashes of light appearing through the curtains. He threw up the sash and looked out. There was a stream of people hurrying past; the rattle of rapid wheels, a confusion of cries, and behind the opposite houses the vivid light of a great fire. "Hathorne's factory!" was the general burden of what was said.

"Hathorne's factory!" said Anthony; "yes, it must be so; there's the chimney, in the midst of the glare. I must go out, Mary, and see what is being done."

He left her, and was away an hour. Mary stood at the window watching the rise and fall of the great mass of light, the hurrying crowd, and the upturned faces. Fear for Lucy's sake, lest her brother should be suffering ruin from the destructive flames, was in part taking the place

of her own personal trouble; but, on the other hand, what she saw seemed to blend with what she had been feeling, as if the scene she had just acted in with grief so sudden, were reproduced externally before her eyes. The night, still and star-lit an hour ago, was herself and her young happiness; the fierce, unexpected fire, her husband's anger; the unknown multitude rushing past, was like her own strange and startled thoughts, and within, as well as without, there was a sound of alarm and a foreboding of evil. The flames sank by degrees; so Anthony had calmed his passion. But where the fiery tongues had been quivering, she knew there was now a wreck and a ruin; what was there in her own house? Her husband came back. He came in with a look of exultation. Mary's eyes brightened as she saw it, but then grew doubtful. She could not tell why, but his look did not make her happy.

"All destroyed," he said. "He is not more than half insured; he is in my power. We shall have him at the bank to-morrow, wanting ad-

vances. He shall be crushed. It is a providential accident, Mary."

Mary caught his meaning in a moment. His anger, sparing her, would fall on Lucy's brother. The mischief she had done would be counterbalanced by the destruction of a political enemy. All her heart rose up against it. Not giving herself time to hesitate, she put her round arm on his shoulder, and drew herself close to him.

"Dearest, could you ruin him for this?"

"I can leave him to bear the consequences of his own carelessness, Mary, and as he is a hindrance to an excellent cause, I shall certainly do so. It will make amends for what your indiscretion has done."

But Mary only drew nearer.

"Husband, I am sick at heart."

"You have been excited. It's late; go to bed."

"I shall never sleep in peace; I shall never lie down happily, if Richard Hathorne is ruined."

"Then you are very wrong. Leave him to me."

"Dearest, I will indeed, but it would crush me utterly, if I felt that my own thoughtlessness had brought your anger on him, and helped to ruin him and Lucy. I have no right to speak, I know, after my great fault, but I 'm sure you will never deal harshly with him. Dear love, help him, instead of harming him: win him over with generosity; let him feel how noble you are. None know it so well as I, but all the world should do so, and it shall, husband."

She looked at him with breathless, almost wild eagerness. She wondered how she had dared to speak. She felt as if another burst of anger must be the consequence. Anthony stood silent for a few moments; then he stroked her head and kissed her forehead.

"Mary, I never change my purposes for merely sentimental reasons, but my judgment is open to conviction, and what I think it right to do, I am not afraid of doing. At present you may be satisfied. If Mr. Hathorne asks for help, he shall have it. It may even win him over, as you suggest; I think it will; at all events, it shall be done."

His words seemed to wipe out the sorrow of the evening. Mary clung to him with new pride and affection, and he himself seemed to take her back at once to his former confidence. But from that day there was a change. He never entirely trusted her again. The fault had been chiefly his own, but he never saw it. He had no right to look for a politician's prudence in an inexperienced girl, but he did look for it; he had no right to blame her when, being herself unwarned, she was ignorant or thoughtless of the need of secrecy; but he did blame her, and nobody besides. After that day's experience, he might have trusted her with the secrets of heaven itself; but that he never understood. She had told his secret to his injury. He must be guarded with her ever after.

Husbands, who lead your own separate lives with your own independent interests—who have your plans and pleasures, your hopes and fears, your successes and failures, of which your wives know nothing, because it is dangerous to trust a woman—I have a little secret to tell you. You

may be very fine fellows, but you know nothing about the truth of marriage. There are few young wives, I dare say, who would not once in their lives fall into a mistake like Mary's, with a husband like Anthony; but there are none who would not bitterly repent it and deserve a greater confidence instead of a less thereafter. Suppose the case to be otherwise; I wish to know whose fault it is, and what kind of remedy you are suggesting? A man who woos, wins, and marries a girl to whom he dare not trust every secret in his soul, has already proved his own judgment to be so worthless, and his own discretion so indiscreet, that he may be sure, once for all, his wife cannot be more foolish than himself, and to keep his own counsel from her, for the sake of prudence, is to lock up his house for safety with a thief inside.

You smile at the idea; you have a manly scorn for sentimentalism, and you satirize the writer. You beg to tell that individual that conjugal confidence is very charming in its way, but that although we have found the North-west Passage

and the Mountains of the Moon, we have not yet found Utopia. Very well.

It turned out that Lucy Hathorne had not delayed relating to her brother what she recollected of Mary's conversation, and he again had immediately communicated the facts to Mr. Hornbeam. But Lucy's version was far from being a correct one, and little was really known concerning the plans of the Borough Wall Club. The town, however, was soon placarded by Mr. Hornbeam with accounts of a conspiracy for overturning the prescriptive rights of the freemen, and the advantage of secrecy was thus lost to the reformers. A fierce struggle ensued. The election was looked forward to with doubt and impatience by all parties. In the meantime, Hathorne, overwhelmed by the disastrous fire which had destroyed his principal factory and entailed an almost ruinous loss, had, as Anthony foresaw, applied to the Bank for temporary aid. He went in fear and trembling, remembering that but a few hours before he had been doing his best to frustrate Anthony's designs and excite his enmity. He came away full of

gratitude and admiration. His wishes had been complied with in the handsomest manner, and his political offences had only been alluded to so far as to make him understand that they were perfectly well known, but, in the hour of his misfortune, entirely forgiven. Mr. Hathorne was quite overcome. He went at once to Mr. Hornbeam, explained what had happened, and told him it was impossible for him, under the circumstances, to take any further part in opposition to Mr. Forrest. Mr. Hornbeam, in a loud voice, denounced him as a turncoat; but as the new chimney was not yet either finished or paid for, he reconsidered his expressions and acquiesced in the retirement of Hathorne from party politics.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### FLIGHT SHOOTING.

So it stood on the day before the annual election. The Borough Wall Club had separated on the previous evening in somewhat lower spirits than usual. Their affairs had prospered tolerably well, till an unexpected appearance of coolness on the part of some of their supporters had alarmed them not a little, and given rise to a suspicion of foul play working secretly on the other side. Strenuous efforts had been made to fathom the matter — Mr. Beaumont's legal subtlety, Anthony's active talent and the zeal of Mr. Daniel Hobbes, had all been exerted to the utmost, but still in vain, and it was the mutual acknowledgment that the mischief undoubtedly kept growing while nobody had succeeded in laying

hold of it, that sent the Club to their several beds with anything but light upon their countenances. Mary saw that Anthony was out of spirits, and gathered from the little he said that his success had become more doubtful. Since the night of his anger she had been too timid to inquire into the details of his proceedings, and he had not volunteered anything more than general information. She took this for a sign of his continued distrust, and grieved over it not a little. In reality, it arose chiefly from the preoccupied state of his mind, which would have made it burdensome to him to relate the particulars of what he had already done, while his thoughts were constantly on the stretch towards things that were yet to do.

The last day of preparation came. Anthony, as usual when there was much work to be done, began it very early, came hastily to breakfast, and was gone again before the urn had done hissing. Mary had grown restless and very anxious; and finding it hard to settle down to anything, she went across to Lucy Hathorne. Lucy was in her

breakfast-room, making a nosegay of autumnal roses at a side table. Mr. Daniel Hobbes stood on the rug, looking at her, and Mr. Martin Dove, with a book in his hand, leaned against the window and looked at the flowers.

"I feel ashamed of you; yes, indeed, upon my word I do," Lucy was saying, when Mary entered the room. "Dear Mrs. Forrest," she cried, running to her, "now do come in and help me to put some spirit into these gentlemen; I declare they might as well be stocks and stones."

"My dear madam, Miss Lucy is perfectly right; I am a deserter from the camp; you catch me in the fact," said Mr. Hobbes, shaking Mary by the hand, "but there are extenuating circumstances, madam; the fight is for to-morrow, and we may come out of it with grave countenances. To-day, you see, Miss Lucy smiles, and I steal away for a little preliminary sunshine."

"And he shan't get it, my dear," said Lucy. "I declare I'm frowning at them both if they could see my mind. Why, the election is just going as wrong as ever it can, and we shall be

beaten for certain, and they know it, if something isn't done to-day. I've been trying to make them ashamed of themselves for standing still a minute, but it's no use; it's always the way with men; when they think it can't be helped they just take it quietly, instead of struggling and screaming all the more, as a woman would do!"

"Is it so very bad?" Mary asked, anxiously. "I know we are not safe, but I thought it was not at all hopeless."

"My dear Mrs. Forrest," said Mr. Hobbes, "we must hope for the best, but, certainly, corruption is going on, and we can't trace it out, and whether we shall be up or down to-morrow is a great mystery. Unscrupulous enemies, you see; a terrible fellow that Hornbeam, and there's nothing weaker than human nature." He looked at the roses and sighed. Martin Dove sighed also, and said, suddenly—

"I have no vote, Miss Hathorne. I wish I had a vote."

"Why, Mr. Dove, you might do ten thousand things besides voting."

"Could I do ten thousand things, Miss Hathorne?"

"Yes, to be sure; or one of them."

"Which one of them do you think I could do, Miss Hathorne?"

"Oh, you must find out for yourself—I can't pretend to know; but if I were you I 'd go about the town from morning to night till I hunted up some of their secrets. Never mind those roses; they may tumble down if they like; I was going to make nosegays of them to-morrow for some of you, but I shan't give one away. Nobody deserves them now."

"May I have them, Miss Hathorne, if I deserve them to-morrow?" said Martin Dove, with unusual energy.

"Well, you won't; so it's no use promising. I tell you what," said she, turning to Mr. Hobbes, who had gone round to the table and was smelling the flowers, "the whole bunch shall go to whichever of you two idle gentlemen does the best service before the election 's over—a lady's favor, you see; just a badge of honor to boast

of. If that won't stir you, you might as well be lying with my poor little dog in the garden."

She blushed a little as she made this offer of a prize, and said, laughingly, to Mary—

"Mrs. Forrest, I did use to envy you so, but I don't one bit this morning. I do think if my husband was going to stand an election I should worry myself to pieces ten times over till I knew whether he had won."

Mary was worrying herself quite sufficiently, and had as good a chance as most people of going to pieces under the operation, but her feelings were not so near the surface as Lucy's, and you must have put your hand upon her heart to know what was going on there. Lucy's challenge seemed strongly to affect the gentlemen. Mr. Hobbes took up his hat, and buttoned his coat.

"Oh, Miss Lucy," said he, "you drive me away; I can't stay idle now. Come, Martin; let us start fair. Upon my honor, I don't believe there 's another stone to be turned; but who knows?—who knows? We 'll shake the

rocks! we'll do prodigies! we'll rob Miss Lucy of her roses!"

Martin Dove, who had been looking grimly at the floor, suddenly raised his head, and exclaiming, "Yes, I can. I can do something," walked rapidly to the door. There he turned, and walking back to where Lucy stood, he shook hands with her, and bade her "good morning," passed by Mary without observing her, and the next minute was striding across the market-place with his hat in one hand, his book in the other, and his looks conversing with the stones. Leaving Daniel Hobbes to perform his own prodigies, he walked on alone, and took the road towards the Four All's. On the way he became conscious that his head was bare, and went back some distance to fetch his hat. Discovering it in his hand, he uttered an exclamation of joy at having come upon it sooner than he expected, and immediately retraced his steps with all speed.

Mr. Dove was far from being a fool, and where his thoughts concentrated themselves they were

clear and luminous. The misfortune was that the concentration went so far as to leave everything blank and black except the one single point of brightness. That point at present was Mrs. Fowkes, the landlady of the Four All's. Mrs. Fowkes was not entitled to pin-money by her marriage contract, neither was her husband in circumstances to overwhelm her with voluntary gifts of a pecuniary kind. To console herself under these disadvantages, she was in the habit of taking in washing. Her customers were not numerous, for Mrs. Fowkes' temper had a private residence in her fingers, and as washing-day generally brought its own peculiar causes of exasperation, the garments passing into her hands were apt to come out of them in a state which, while it would have done honor to a repentant patriarch, accorded very badly with the economy of modern days. Martin Dove was conscious that his linen was short-lived on the average, and that his buttons in particular held their situations on the most precarious terms; but as his perceptions had not yet been concentrated

on the cause of these phenomena, he was still on Mrs. Fowkes' books, and was perhaps the most favored of her remaining patrons.

On this particular morning he discovered the inn without first walking beyond it; and going round to the yard behind, he tapped at the washhouse window, which was partly open, with a wreath of steam curling through the aperture.

"You can't come in. It's full of tubs, and the dolly's going," said the voice of the landlady through the steam.

"I don't want to come in, Mrs. Fowkes: I only want to talk to you, if you please."

"I can't talk a word to-day, Mr. Dove. I'm just washing your shirts, and I wish I may die if I don't wring their necks off if you come bothering."

"I don't care very much about the shirts to-day, Mrs. Fowkes—I want to know something about the election. Do tell me, if you please, what they are doing in the committee."

"They're doing no good, I can tell you.

They're the ruin of Fowkes,—they'll bring us to the parish, and I wish they may be dead beat to-morrow; that's what I do," and a loud splash testified to the vigor of Mrs. Fowkes' feelings.

"Why, I wish they may be beaten too," said Martin. "Don't you think we could manage it between us?"

"No, I don't. They're bribing half the town with gold guineas, and who's going to vote against them after that?"

"Mrs. Fowkes, I owe you five shillings; I 've got a pound in my pocket, and I shan't want any change. Now you don't mean to say they are bribing?"

There was a louder splashing, and a thicker volume of steam, but no verbal answer. Martin put his hand through the steam, and dropped something in at the window. The splashing ceased for an instant, and was then renewed less noisily than before, while a voice once more issued from the interior.

"They're a pack of fools, and so's Fowkes.

They've got their list made out, and it's on the mantel under Adam and Eve; and the door's locked, and Fowkes has got the key, and the window's on to the field, and they'll not any of them be there till six o'clock." The voice ceased abruptly, and the dolly was put into rapid motion.

"Mrs. Fowkes," said Martin, "if you could only get me that list ——"

"Give over your bothering. I can't, and I shan't, and you may get it yourself."

"If you could get me into the room, Mrs. Fowkes ——"

"Just go away; I'll hear none of your talk; if I don't call Fowkes this minute I wish —" The rest was inaudible by reason of the splashing. Martin stood silent for a minute or two, during which the sound of the dolly went on increasing, and then lifting up his head as if he had formed a resolution, he turned away, and entered a grass field at the back of the Four All's. One window on the ground floor looked upon the field. Martin went up to it. It was a sash window, not very

far from the ground. Looking through the glass, he found the room to be a small parlor, indifferently furnished with a round table and some high-backed chairs. The fire-place was near the window. The black mantel-piece was ornamented with a dog's head in china at one end, and at the other, a second work of art of the same material, representing Adam and Eve under an apple-tree. Beneath the latter lay a folded paper, whereon Martin fixed his eyes as eagerly as if it had been a windfall of the forbidden fruit. He had scarcely made this survey, however, when the stroke of a spade startled him. Turning round, he found Mr. Fowkes himself within twenty yards of him, digging a piece of ground at the side of the field. Mr. Fowkes stopped; stood up, and looked at him. Martin, who had been contemplating a forcible entry and abduction, was on the point of being confounded, when some good spirit held his thoughts together for him and suggested a bold and sudden stroke of policy. He walked straight up to the landlord and held out his hand.

"Mr. Fowkes," said he, "the town is full of nothing but the election, and I want to have a quiet afternoon. May I bring my bow and arrows and shoot in your field? I shan't hit the cows."

Mr. Fowkes wiped his forehead, and looked round the field.

"Well, yes, Mr. Dove, you can if you like; but where's your target?"

"I want to try flight shooting. It's very good for the muscles, Mr. Fowkes; I wish to harden my muscles."

"It's a pity you don't dig then," said the landlord, gloomily, taking up his spade again. "I should say it's a pity you don't dig, Mr. Dove."

Martin agreed with him, but thought it desirable to try shooting first, and went away for his bow and arrows. His purpose was to return with them while Mr. Fowkes should be having his dinner, and, if he found the coast clear, to attempt at once a seizure of the paper whereon Adam and Eve were standing. Walking along, however, at a rapid pace, his eyes

as usual fell upon the ground. There, if not in fact, at least in fancy, Lucy Hathorne's roses lay strewed before him, miraculously multiplied, or moving forward as his shadow did, for his quick steps did not carry him past them. Treading this path of flowers, smiling inwardly, and free as any disembodied soul from consciousness of space or time, Martin entered the town, traversed the market-place, walked down the High Street, crossed the bridge, and at the end of a couple of hours was some miles distant from Porchester and Lucy. How far his sportive fate might have strewed the fairy rose-leaves, is a question on which, for lack of evidence, our judgment must be suspended. He was overtaken by Mr. Forrest the elder, who, driving by in his gig, pulled up his horse and asked Martin if he would ride.

"Thank you," said Martin, looking up for the first time; and he got into the gig.

"Where are you going, Dove?" Mr. Forrest inquired, driving on.

"Thank you, I am going for my bow and

arrows," the youth answered with much simplicity.

"Bow and arrows, man! Why, have you left them in the stone quarry, or are you going round by the South Pole?"

Martin looked before him, and then behind him; after which he rubbed his eyes, and looked again.

"I suppose I have come too far," said he. "Will you let me get down, if you please?"

Mr. Forrest put him down again with a hearty laugh, told him to be of good cheer, as he had accomplished just half his journey, and recommended him to run straight up against the first house in Porchester. "For fear," said he, "we should have you going like a pendulum till your legs are spavined."

By great good fortune, Mr. Forrest's fears on this account were not realized. Martin was once more treading the path of roses when he crossed the bridge, but a waggon coming down the street so nearly ran over him at the dangerous turning that the cries of the bystanders, the gruff oath of the waggoner, and the sudden rubbing

of a horse's nose against his cheek, brought him hastily back from fairy-land and enabled him once more to concentrate his mental powers on the expedition to the Four All's.

He arrived there in due time, bow in hand. It was late in the afternoon. Mr. Fowkes had dined long ago and was again strengthening his muscles by spade exercise. The window could no longer be attacked unnoticed, so Martin reconsidered his plans, became inspired with a new one, and, chuckling to himself, began his flight shooting in the meadows.

About six o'clock in the evening, Mr. Hornbeam, with three or four companions, entered the inn. The landlord, hearing their voices, stuck his spade in the ground and joined them. It was quite dusk out of doors and nearly dark within, so Mr. Fowkes lit two candles and led the party of politicians into the locked-up room. They seemed jolly enough; were rubbing their hands and joking. Mr. Hornbeam in particular indulged Mr. Fowkes with a poke in the ribs and a slap on the shoulder. The candles were

put upon the table, brandy-and-water was called for, and all sat down to business.

Mr. Hornbeam had just opened the proceedings in a loud voice, when the glass from one of the upper window-panes fell in with a crash, and an arrow dropped on the table. The speaker stopped short. Everybody rose in consternation. The sash was thrown up, and a loud "hallo!" from several voices disturbed the silence of the field. Martin Dove came running from no great distance, his bow under his arm.

"What are you up to, sir?" "Are you going to assassinate us, sir?" "What the devil do you mean by it, Mr. Dove?" and other warmer ejaculations, met him at the open window.

"If you please I was only flight shooting; I beg your pardon; will you let me have my arrow, if you please?" and he climbed at once into the room.

"Take your flight shooting to Jericho!" "Break his arrow on his back!" "It's Martin Dove; he's a fool!" "Make him pay, Fowkes, and turn him out, and ——"

In the midst of these compliments, Martin had reached the table, and taken up his arrow. Turning quickly round, a dexterous sweep of his bow, by a seeming accident, overturned both candlesticks at once. All was darkness and confusion. Martin had got himself close to the mantel-piece; feeling for Adam and Eve he found the coveted paper, thrust it into his pocket, and jumping through the window again, ran off as fast as he could. Mr. Hornbeam followed him with his voice and Mr. Fowkes with his legs for a considerable distance, but the voice could not hurt and the legs could not catch him, and entering his lodgings out of breath, he threw his hat up to the ceiling, lit his candle, and immediately sat down to examine the stolen document, whose contents, indeed, he did not know, although, trusting to the tone of Mrs. Fowkes' voice, he had little doubt of their importance. He was not mistaken. The paper contained a list of voters who had been bribed by the secret committee of the Porcites. Martin carefully read it through, put it back into his pocket, ordered his tea, had

a grand vision of roses in the room, which kept him there for the rest of the evening, and on retiring to bed was visited by a dream of Adam and Eve in Paradise receiving a bribe from Mr. Hornbeam.

The loss of the paper was not immediately perceived by the disturbed committee. On finding that it was missing, they were struck with consternation, which was by no means allayed by the impossibility of conjecturing the cause or manner of its disappearance. Their suspicions never turned for an instant upon Martin Dove. He was thought a fool and a simpleton, and his complicity in an electioneering plot could not be dreamed of. The meeting in consequence became a very gloomy and acrid one, everybody fancying he saw traitors in the others, but feeling afraid to say so at such a critical time.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### LUCY'S ROSES.

Pretty early next morning all Porchester was up and doing. The election of the new town councillors took place in the Town Hall, and thither the tide of interest soon set in, bearing men, women, and children, along with it. The large room of the hall was capable of holding all the free burgesses of the borough, and the votes were taken in it, a platform being also erected at one end for the accommodation of the speakers and public functionaries. The customary forms were gone through, the hearts of the candidates began to palpitate, and the poll was opened. A few votes had been taken when Martin Dove appeared suddenly on the platform and seemed about to address the electors.

"Not a freeman! Turn him out!" was the first exclamation from those below. It was followed by a laugh and a cry of, "Oh, it 's Dove; hear him!" "Speak up, simpleton!" "Give him a book!" "Hear him!" for everybody thought some entertainment must be in store. Martin himself, perfectly unconcerned, and, indeed, quite in a state of abstract speculation, opened his mouth at once, and delivered himself of the following speech—

"Twenty seven at ten pounds a-piece, and five at twenty pounds a-piece. I took it from the mantel-piece in the committee-room last night, for I was resolved to do something. You shall all hear who have been bribed, for their names are written down in Mr. Hornbeam's hand, and I have got the paper in my pocket."

As Martin paused, a variety of sounds broke out simultaneously round about him; cheers, hisses, and laughter, mingled together, shook the hall. Mr. Hornbeam was afterwards reported to have turned pale and lost his voice for the moment. Anthony and his committee, most of whom were on the platform, pressed eagerly

round the young orator, and for the time the polling was suspended. Martin triumphantly thrust his hand into his coat pocket; all eyes followed his hand; it was drawn out: alas! it was empty. He thrust it in again, with a somewhat anxious look, felt and fumbled, and then pulled the pocket inside out for a more certain scrutiny. There was nothing in it. He stood blank and silent, holding the lining between his thumb and finger, while the laughter rapidly became predominant over all other sounds.

"Oh!" cried Martin Dove, with sudden recollection; "I changed my coat this morning; the paper is in the other one!"

This announcement was followed by a storm of louder laughter, and a number of ejaculations of the least complimentary kind. In the midst of them, Martin made his way to the door, and hurried homeward as fast as he could run. But woe to those who fire blank cartridges at British bull-dogs! Martin Dove reached home without molestation, changed his coat, and came out again with the fatal paper in his hand. On his own

threshold he was seized by four strong arms in wait for him. In a moment the paper vanished; in another, he was lying, bound hand and foot, at the bottom of a hackney carriage, the doors closed, the shutters up, and the wheels rattling away full speed. So they rattled for a couple of hours. The details of that journey Martin was not fond of rehearsing, but late at night the poor youth was seen re-entering his lodgings, dirty, tired, and footsore, having walked home upon a path of thorns instead of roses, the space of about twenty miles.

Mr. Forrest and his friends were of course unacquainted with Martin's adventure at the Four All's, and had seen him rush from the hall, after the searching of his empty pocket, with smiles on their countenances and a general belief that he was dreaming in his usual way. Daniel Hobbes alone, having more reason than the rest to think there might be something of real importance at the bottom of it, and observing the heads of Mr. Hornbeam's party laid rapidly together, resolved after some reflection to follow the poor

youth and see what came of it all. The Porcites, however, had been sudden and swift in action, and had outstripped him considerably. When he got within a hundred yards of Martin's lodging a coach was at the door, a man stood at each door-post; he saw Martin come out of the house, and was witness to his instant seizure and abduction. One of the two captors jumped on the coach-box; the other, whom Mr. Hobbes recognised as the landlord of the Four All's, put the paper he had taken from Martin's hand into the pocket of his trousers, and walked leisurely up the street. Mr. Hobbes observed these things with considerable excitement of spirit. It was plain enough that Martin Dove had discovered something of the greatest consequence, and that the secret of it was now in the trousers pocket of Mr. Fowkes. Mr. Hobbes had been doing his best to win Lucy Hathorne's roses, but hitherto the golden gates of opportunity had apparently been closed against him. He saw them swinging back upon their hinges at this auspicious moment, and with the swift decision of one born to conquer, he at once rushed

in. Clothing his courage in a suit of prudence, and sharply stirring up whatever of the serpent lay coiled in his inner soul, he stepped into a gateway and remained concealed till Mr. Fowkes passed by. That happy spouse approached at a quiet pace with looks of comparative contentment. He had done a piece of excellent good service to Mr. Hornbeam's party, and was no doubt walking in the sunshine of placid self-congratulation. Mr. Hobbes waited till he had gone past him, and then following the landlord, he tapped him on the arm.

"So you've won the day, Fowkes: won the day, and given us a thrashing."

Mr. Fowkes stopped and turned round.

"Well, Mr. Hobbes, it's early yet; but I think you'll get what you deserve."

"Not a doubt of it; not a doubt of it; there's a providence over all, Fowkes, but we shall take it like men, you see; bear no malice and make a joke of it; shake hands and be comfortable. That's the way Fowkes; that's the way."

"I should say it is, when you're beat," said the landlord; "I should say it is."

"Why, let us begin then," said Mr. Hobbes, "we'll set an example to posterity; we'll go and drink a bottle of wine at my lodgings, and then see how the poll stands. You shall drink success to the conquerors; I'll drink consolation to the vanquished; you shall see my fossils, and we'll shake hands over the ammonites."

Mr. Fowkes looked towards the Town Hall. His friends were there, waiting doubtless in great anxiety to hear how his mission had been executed. Their peril was over, however; the paper was in his pocket; he felt himself decidedly thirsty in respect of wine, and felt that his late achievement deserved an immediate recompence. He accepted the friendly invitation and went to the lodgings of Mr. Daniel Hobbes, which were close at hand. Mr. Hobbes was a bachelor, without a profession, whose material wants depended for their supply on the rent of a single large meadow of about fifty acres, and not finding it necessary to resort to extraordinary measures for the employment of his income, he lived quietly and cheaply in two comfortable rooms. Into one of these

he introduced Mr. Fowkes with the utmost cordiality, his thoughts, however, being chiefly fixed on that gentleman's pocket, and his brain kept on the stretch to discover some means of getting at the contents thereof; for the trousers pocket of an Englishman is not easily picked, the employment of force was difficult, and time was pressing.

The room was of moderate size and was much more than half-filled with evidences of its owner's taste: cases of fossil specimens covered the walls; the skeleton of a small elephant stood before the window; on the rug lay several ribs of a megatherium, and the table, mantel-piece, and chairs were strewed with the beasts, birds and fishes, of a stony world. Clearing one of the chairs, which was encumbered with nothing heavier than a pre-Adamite dragon-fly and the lizard which might have eaten him, Mr. Hobbes begged his guest to be seated, and took the promised wine from a shelf laden with various bottles and glasses, some retorts, a few chemicals, and a telescope; for the sciences love to go hand-in-hand, and Mr. Hobbes

did not condemn his favorite one to separation from all the others. Mr. Fowkes emptied two or three glasses in silence, his host joining him sparingly, chatting pleasantly about the specimens in the room, and watching with eager eyes for the effect of the wine.

"Do you sit here of a night, all alone?" the landlord asked at length, after looking slowly round him and raising his glass again.

"Very often, very often; a bachelor you see; no conjugal society here; none of your happiness, Fowkes."

"Because I should pitch that chap down-stairs, if I was you," said Mr. Fowkes, stolidly; pointing sideways at the fleshless elephant.

"What, you don't like him, eh? He's very quiet company; very quiet."

"He's all bones," said Mr. Fowkes, with a suspicious glance towards the skeleton. "He's not my sort; specially at night. I should say it's time he was buried."

Mr. Fowkes appeared to be growing superstitious, and his entertainer, taking this to signify

that the wine was getting into his head, laughed heartily, filled up the emptied glass again, and hoped to find him changing into a courageous mood after another draught. But wine and Mr. Fowkes had had many a trial of strength together, and the latter, by long exercise, had so far got the upper hand that any single bottle became totally spent and exhausted before he was fairly breathed. Daniel Hobbes watched in vain for any favorable symptom. His guest drank quietly and talked composedly, with frequent looks of uneasiness when he turned towards the elephant, but without the least appearance of such a state of mind as would make his pocket insecure. The time passed, and Mr. Hobbes grew desperate. That paper, charged with the fate of Porchester and perfumed by Lucy's roses, was within a yard of him, in his own house, among his own fossils. Now for some lava stream to make a fossil of the landlord! some sudden rot upon his garments, some terror to hold him frozen while the clock ticked twice! If the elephant would only fall with a crash, or shed

even a single bone, it might be enough. But things that had lain unmoved by the shocks of ages were not likely to bestir themselves even for the sake of the Borough Wall. Mr. Hobbes looked round at his stony friends, and found no help in them. "Well," thought he, "it must be done, nevertheless." His eyes fell despairingly on the shelf from which the wine had been taken. Suddenly they lighted up. He looked quickly round again, and took up a large fossil from the floor.

"Fowkes, my good friend, you haven't looked at my ammonites—the very finest specimens in the county. There, take this great fellow in your hands."

"What did you call him?" asked Mr. Fowkes, taking the heavy stone with an apparent curiosity.

"An ammonite, Fowkes; a magnificent ammonite, upon my word."

"Don't tell me," said the landlord. "It says King Saul killed the Ammonites till the heat of the day; but he'd have a job to kill these."

"Ha! ha! so he would! so he would! They were stone dead long enough before Saul was king. A coincidence in nomenclature, my dear fellow—Saul's Ammonites were men, and these were fishes; that's all! But let me show you a little experiment. Did you ever see, now, the effect of aquafortis on an ammonite?"

"Never did," said Fowkes, re-examining the stone.

"Ah! I thought not—I thought not; a very curious effect, Fowkes. Keep hold of the stone; he won't bite; he's as dead as if King Saul had had him." Mr. Hobbes went to his shelf, and took a small bottle from it. "Wait a bit," said he, "you shall see; you shall see."

Stepping forward with the uncorked vial in his hand, he stumbled over another ammonite on the floor, and falling against Mr. Fowkes, contrived to spill the contents of the vial over that gentleman's knees.

"Bless my soul!" cried Hobbes, as he scrambled up again. "Dear me, dear me! it's all over him! It's worse than lava! Take your

trousers off, my dear fellow; take your trousers off. You'll burn like Hercules; you'll be as black as Satan in three minutes! Goodness gracious, take your trousers off, or you won't have a leg to stand on!"

Stricken with sudden terror, Mr. Fowkes dropped the ammonite, started from his chair, and precipitately did as he was told. But no sooner had the luckless garment left the heels of his boots than it was seized on by Daniel Hobbes, who, rushing with it from the room, left the landlord in momentary bewilderment staring after him. The truth was not long in flashing upon him. Looking down in consternation at his knees, he paused on the threshold of the door; turned back, seized the unhappy ammonite, and rushed towards the window. The skeleton stood in his way, but between its ribs he could see his enemy already in the street. With a loud crash Mr. Fowkes hurled the ammonite through the glass. His wrath was impotent, and his aim imperfect. The fossil broke into fifty pieces on the pavement; but Daniel Hobbes, with

the trousers in his hand, ran as fast as he could towards the Town Hall.

In the meantime the election had taken a turn decidedly unfavorable to the Porticite interest. Martin's unproven accusation had raised a laugh against them and an impression that they were at their wits' end for fresh resources, and when, after some time, he failed to reappear, the opposite party rose in spirits and redoubled their exertions. Slowly, but steadily, the polling went the wrong way; the Borough Wall Club stood in a decided minority; their supporters began to think the cause a hopeless one, and the last fatal stage of lethargy was on the point of setting in. Anthony saw the unmistakeable signs of defeat, and prepared himself to meet it with fitting dignity; while at the same time he resolved to stand his ground to the last, and to show his conquerors that if they could out-vote him they could not frighten him.

Mary had spent the morning of that day in one of the front rooms of her house, from whose windows she could see the Town Hall, hung with

flags, and surrounded by an excited crowd of non-electors. Her own excitement, if less demonstrative, was far more intense. Ambition for her husband, irritation against herself, and a passionate longing to forget in victory the indiscretion which had taken from her at least a portion of Anthony's confidence, all joined together now to make the hours of suspense unbearable. She walked about the room, she leaned out of the window, she listened to the various cries—the cheers, hisses, laughter; and when by degrees the signs all grew ominous, she became sick with anxiety and alarm. From time to time she sent her servants to make inquiries; their reports were less and less satisfactory; and at last Mary shut the window, threw herself on the sofa, and had nearly given up the struggle against her tears when Anthony came into the room. He looked flushed and grave. Mary stood up trembling.

"Do you want anything, dearest?" she asked, but he answered the question of her eyes, and said,

"I believe I am beaten, Mary; but we shall

fight to the last. Be worthy of your husband, my love; defeat and weakness need not go together. Give me those papers from the sideboard."

She gave them, saying nothing; trying very hard to be composed. As he left the room again she managed to ask—

"When shall you come back?"

"It may be six o'clock," he answered, and she was left alone. The room seemed very dismal, there was no breathing in it. Mary put her bonnet on, passed through her garden, and went by the private footpath to the Borough Wall. It was her favorite resort. She liked the view and the gliding of the river down below; the rough old ruin, the green meadow, and the rooks in its tall elms. The elms were touched now with autumnal gold; the lilacs on the ruin were shedding their crumpled leaves; the three ash-trees had lost half their shade; the river was swollen with recent rains, and the fern leaves hanging over it were turning brown.

"He did not upbraid me," Mary thought. "He

is too kind and generous, but it is all my fault, all my doing; I have undone all he has labored for; he will never trust me as he used to do; he cannot, no, he ought not; I am a foolish, thoughtless, gossiping girl, unworthy of him; and yet so loving him."

She walked round the ruin; she leaned over the high bank, she threw dead leaves into the river. More than an hour passed, and her unrest increased; she almost longed for evening and the final news. Turning the corner of the wall again, she saw Anthony coming across the meadow. So soon! had he given up the contest? was he looking for her? She stood still. He approached the other end of the ruin and did not see her. No! he was not looking for anybody. His head was erect, his eyes were on the distant landscape. He walked straight on, to the edge of the bank, stopped there, and raised his hat, and wiped his forehead,—then he folded his arms and stood, tall, and like a conqueror, still gazing. Mary came to his side.

"Dear Anthony!"

He turned to her, smiling.

"You here, Mary! That's well. We have conquered, Mary; I am elected: we are rulers of Porchester."

"Oh, husband!"

He did not chide her for sobbing now. He spoke some kind, energetic words, and then told her how it had happened. How at the moment of despair Daniel Hobbes had entered the Town Hall with Mr. Fowkes' trousers on his arm; how, amidst a scene indescribable, he had drawn the paper from the pocket, had told its history, read its contents, and shown the writing to be Mr. Hornbeam's. How the Porcite committee had been hooted from the Hall, had declared the resignation of their candidates, and had left the Borough Wall Club in undisputed possession of the field.

Thus the election ended, and thus several things came to pass together. The apple of discord between Mary and her husband was, at least for the time, removed; Lucy's roses were divided between Martin Dove and Daniel

Hobbes, at the generous suggestion of the latter; and these two gentlemen became the objects of deep and lasting hatred to the landlord of the Four All's.

END OF VOL. I.

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